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INSIDE

NATIONAL

Mondale gets NEA nod for the Presidential primaries and caucuses. 3

STATE

Oklahoma overhauls teacher education. 7

LOCAL

Cambridge, Mass., Association helps create 'school of the future.' 8

HUMAN RIGHTS

The 'education' of South Africans in the shadow of apartheid. 6

CLASSROOM

Teaching writing . . . while teaching subject matter. 9

Once a teacher, always a teacher: NEA leaders return to their roots. 10

Aged doesn't mean senile: a TV lesson. 15

INTERVIEW

Speech teacher, drama coach, union leader, bus driver: this Minnesota prof does it all. 11

PERSONAL

Tips on breaking the cigarette habit, insuring your income against disability, and choosing a 'manufactured' home. 21

LAW

'Due process': basic employee right protects jobs. 19

DEBATE

Should we stretch the school year or school day? Texan says sure, Virginian says 'no way.' 23

NEA Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. NOVEMBER 1983

A NEWSPAPER FOR MEM NA ATION

VOL. 2, NO. 2

Movie Star News

The Family: For Better Or Worse

IT'S CHANGING

Story on page 4

CBS-TV

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Parents As Allies

It's time for some candor and some tough talk. About schools. About families. About society.

If our schools are in crisis today, it's partially because families are less intimate, neighborhoods less neighborly, society at large less cohesive than in years gone by. The problems in our schools can't help but reflect the magnitude of our broader social ills.

Yet, at the same time, we need to remember that our schools are still the nation's best hope for a more stable future.

That's why all of us have to redouble our efforts to welcome every segment of the public into the education community. Community begins with communication. So that's where we have to start. And our first communication must be with parents.

We've got to tell parents that we understand their hassles. We understand—as parents and as working people ourselves—the economic strains and workplace stresses parents face. We know the never-ending struggle that is parenthood.

But no amount of stress and strain can ever justify parents' asking us to take their place. We cannot. We will not. Parents must understand—and understand well—that we are allies, not surrogates.

Parents have an obligation to provide at home the basic resources for learning. They need to emphasize the importance of academics and encourage their children to do their best in school. They need to support school rules designed to foster an effective environment for teaching and learning. They need to join with teachers and work to enhance their children's educational progress.

We as educators and as school support staffers are committed to making our schools places where every child can gain a meaningful education. But we can't meet that challenge alone.

Joe Di Dio

NEA President
Mary Hatwood Futrell

We are grateful for the millions of parents who make our work a pleasure. We owe them thanks for their selflessness and for their heroic dedication to their children's welfare. They have been—and remain—our invaluable psychological allies.

But even of these parents, we must ask more. They need to join us when budget-slashing measures threaten schools and programs that enhance educational excellence for all our children. They need to stand by our sides when self-righteous censors threaten academic freedom. Yes, they must become *political* allies of our educational system.

I'm not saying that parents should adopt NEA's political agenda. But I am saying that parents and all Americans who believe in free, universal public education must help maintain it. That "maintenance" is our civic responsibility.

Public schools are our hope—our nation's future. Parents need to become more involved in the life of their children's schools than ever before.

And their employers must help. Many parents want to become more involved—to attend school open houses and conferences with their children's teachers. But they can't—not without facing an economic penalty. Businesses can make a major contribution to American education simply by giving their employees the flexible working hours that can enable working parents to visit their children's schools.

What a small gesture such flexibility on the part of employers would be. What a big difference it would make for our schools and our students.

All these suggestions simply affirm a major theme that runs through most of the recent national reports on education. Parents, the reports tell us, must make the effort to get to know their schools.

The latest report—a study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching based on 30 months of research—asks every community to establish citizen coalitions that can work to advance the cause of public education. These coalitions, says the Carnegie study, should unite parents, educators, community, and business leaders.

"A report card on public education is a report card on the nation," the Carnegie study concludes. "Schools can rise no higher than the communities that support them."

Need more be said?

TRENDS

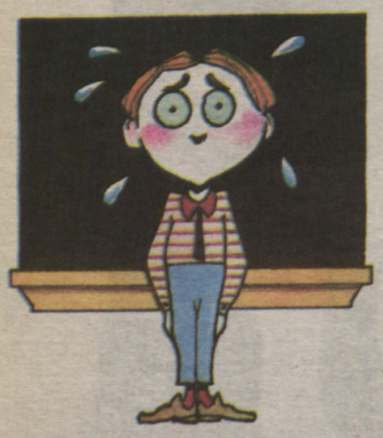
Oral Non-Gratification

They're scared speechless.

That's the typical reaction of secondary students when they're asked to give oral presentations. No assignment causes greater anxiety. And some students are so frightened that they'll take an *F* rather than suffer the agony of an oral report.

Susan Sears, assistant professor of human resources education at Ohio State, uncovered these facts by interviewing more than 4,000 students. She suggests several strategies teachers can use to ease the stress associated with public speaking: encourage more class discussion, teach relaxation techniques, and allow students to present oral reports before small groups.

Sears advises educators to do all they can to avoid creating undue stress: "Moderate stress adds to motivation, but many kids can't handle all the stress they're under today."



The Russian Is Coming

The sharp drop in the number of federal government workers fluent in Russian has sent the National Security Agency (NSA) scurrying after recruits for its language internship program. The NSA—the most secretive of all U.S. intelligence-gathering agencies—has asked 15 colleges and universities to help with the search mission.

Higher education experts on the Soviet Union tend to believe that the unconscionable destruction of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 this past September may affect the recruitment drive. Jim Karambelas, a UN interpreter and former Russian teacher, recalls that another crisis—the 1959 Sputnik launching—spurred interest in Soviet studies. But now, he adds, "we're right back where we were before Sputnik."

Inoculation Innovation

Inoculations against childhood diseases can now begin before a child is born. A 20-year study at Magee-Women's Hospital and the University of Pittsburgh Medical School has revealed that vaccinating pregnant women immunizes the unborn in the womb. The research—the first to document "vaccine crossover"—could dramatically reenergize the drive to eliminate diseases to which infants and young children are especially prone.

Advocates of Monotony

The evidence is clear and decisive: bilingual education programs work. They're essential if equality of opportunity is to be more than a sham for our nation's 3.6 million students with limited English proficiency.

Meanwhile "U.S. English," an alleged public interest organization based in Washington, D.C., has vowed to alert the American public "to the dangers of bilingualism" and to "recapture and defend English as the sole official language of the United States."

The group appears to have allies in the White House: the President has proposed slashing funds for bilingual ed programs by roughly 30 percent for fiscal 1984.

The Public Advantage

U.S. public schools prepare students for college at least as well as—and in many cases better than—private institutions, according to a recent study by Ohio State researcher William R. Morgan.

Morgan's study of 12,700 students from 50 states found that the standardized test scores of college-prep public school students equaled those of Catholic school students and exceeded by five points those of non-Catholic private school students. Morgan concludes that private schools have more elitism and tradition, "but parents have to determine if they want that for their children or they want them to learn more."

Fertile Imaginations

Today's adolescents don't want class mates—at least not in any literal sense. According to a recent study by Dr. David Baskin, a psychologist at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, teenage boys rank "getting a girl pregnant" as their third greatest worry. Only the thoughts of "going to jail" and "flunking out" concern them more.

For adolescent girls, the thought of pregnancy is even more terrifying. They list it second—just after the fear of their parents' death.

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POLITICS '84

MONDALE'S THE ONE

Board votes support: states must still concur.

Walter F. Mondale—the candidate who's pledged that "education would be the highest domestic priority of my Administration"—has passed the toughest test of the 1984 Presidential pre-primary campaign.

Meeting in Washington, D.C., in late September, NEA's 124-person Board of Directors voted overwhelmingly to give Mondale NEA's support in the 1984 Presidential primaries and caucuses.

The Board's vote followed recommendations to back Mondale from NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell and the NEA-PAC Council, a 63-member body representing every NEA state affiliate.

Futrell announced the Board's decision in a news conference packed with reporters from most of the nation's major media.

"In 1984," said Futrell, "there will be no more important issue than education—and no candidate more committed to quality education for all children than Walter Mondale."

NEA Board member Virginia Stacey of Texas agreed. "There's no doubt in my mind he's the best candidate," said Stacey, adding that NEA's support process allowed maximum input from members "and was followed to the letter."

Futrell had kind words for each of the six Democratic candidates who competed for NEA's support—and praised their strong commitment to public education. She had personally quizzed the candidates, testing their positions on key NEA issues established by the members through the Representative Assembly.

President Ronald Reagan chose not to participate in NEA's candidate screening process, and no other Republicans have yet announced their candidacies. Therefore, President Futrell interviewed only Democratic Presidential candidates.

NEA's is probably—for candidates—the most grueling selection process in all of American politics.

The candidates who sought NEA support had to complete a written questionnaire, prepare a videotape on "why I deserve NEA support" for the 7,000 delegates to NEA's 1983 Representative Assembly, provide NEA with detailed financial and campaign information, and, finally, come to NEA Center for a personal one-on-one interview with President Futrell.

The NEA Board's vote to support Mondale doesn't end this process. Before NEA can start up activity for Mondale in any particular state, that state affiliate must first vote to "concur" with the Board's decision. The final word on NEA's Presidential endorsement for the 1984 general elections will belong to Representative Assembly delegates, who may make that decision before, during, or after next summer's RA.

Mondale will be working hard to win state concurrence and that final endorsement.

"What's at stake is more than who will be the next President," the 55-year-old Minnesotan told the NEA Board of Directors after the Board's support vote. "What's at stake is what brought you into education: our children, our future."

Mondale's address to the Board blasted President Reagan for policies that have "divided our nation into two Americas."

"In one America, the Defense Department pays $500 for an ordinary hammer; in the other, our libraries can't afford 50 dollars for books."

And we have a President, Mondale charged, "who will fight to the death for the MX, but won't lift a finger for education. And that's wrong."

"By 1989," the former Vice President continued, "I want to be able to walk into any classroom, talk with the brightest youngsters in that class, and have many of them tell me, 'I want to be a teacher.' "

—Bill Fischer

Joe Di Dio

Immediately after the NEA Board's vote in support of his candidacy, Walter Mondale, flanked by NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell and Executive Director Don Cameron, acknowledges Board members' applause, confessing, "I've always liked teachers."

Joe Di Dio

NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell tells the press, "We are convinced that Walter Mondale is the best our nation has to offer."

Joe Di Dio

NEA Board members Nancy Lee of Oregon (left) and Johnella Martin of Tennessee congratulate the former Vice President.

Joe Di Dio

NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell interviews Walter Mondale at NEA Center—just one step in the careful process of determining the candidates' views on key education issues prior to the NEA support decision.

'Too Early'? No Way!

The NEA Board of Directors' vote to support Walter F. Mondale in the Presidential primaries and caucuses came on September 30, well over a year before the November 1984 general election. Why the early Board action?

The Board's decision is the crucial first step to making sure that NEA members are well represented at next year's Presidential nominating conventions.

Of the 3,900 delegates to be selected for the '84 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco, some 2,000 will have been chosen by mid-March, 1984. This is the first time in history that a majority of convention delegates will be selected so early in the campaign season.

The work of trying to become a delegate has to start even earlier. In many states NEA members interested in running for delegate slots have to file petitions and register by the end of December.

One of those states is Iowa, and NEA Board member John Mesicek says the timing of the support decision is right.

"We need to get going with our organization," Mesicek points out. "This gives our state leaders the time to communicate with the rank and file, so everyone is informed and pulling together."

Delegates to the Democratic Convention will no longer be bound to support a particular candidate on the first ballot—or any other ballot. However, candidates will have the right to approve their slates of would-be delegates. They will want to approve only those they're sure won't change their minds once the convention begins. NEA's support plus state concurrence gives the candidate that assurance.

The NEA Board, in other words, could have waited to make a support decision—but that wait would have cost NEA members a chance to have a real voice at next year's political conventions.

—Bill Fischer

CHANGING HOMES . . .

FAMILIES
HOW THE SCHOOLS

The ideal American nuclear family of the 1950s, with father at work, mother at home, and children in the back of the station wagon, has gone the way of the 78 rpm record. Skyrocketing divorce rates, the movement of women into the workforce, and other social and demographic changes have transformed family life.

"We are witnessing the fragmenting of the American family," observes Manchester, Conn., English teacher and futurist Lee Hay, the 1983 national teacher of the year. "And because the family is in transition," he continues, "so is the relationship between school and home."

The statistics elsewhere on these pages suggest the extent to which America's families are in flux. Not all the change is for the worse, of course. Certainly the move of married women into the workforce increases the entire family's economic security as well as enlarging its horizons. But at least in the near term, the "new family" seems to have increased the likelihood that parents will be absent from substantial portions of their children's lives. Absence—whether due to a parent's living in another household or being at work instead of at home after school—in turn affects how children feel and how they learn.

Teachers are among the first to notice the effects of family changes on children's behavior. Lee Hay comments: "Some children bring little, if any, discipline to school, and the school is expected to instill some. Other children have been exposed to several kinds of discipline, often conflicting, and the school is expected to reconcile them. No longer can we in school assume that our task is merely to reinforce the discipline of the home."

Hay's conclusions are not just his own impressions. Research exists on the effects of some of the new family structures—specifically, the single-parent home and the family with both parents working—on such measures as children's grades, test scores, and conduct. Studies done for the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, among others, give a primarily negative assessment.

At the same time, the Department of Education study also shows that among single-parent families, children whose mothers work are higher achievers than those whose mothers don't work. And a 1983 National Research Council study found "no evidence that maternal employment by itself is either good or bad for children."

Perhaps the connection between family structure and school behavior is not so much a matter of the parents' status—single or married, working or nonworking—as it is of their ability to arrange their lives in such a way that they can be with their children.

Speaking primarily of working mothers, Dorothy Rich, president of the Home and School Institute of Washington, D.C., thinks such "arrangements" are crucial to successful parenting. "Well organized parents manage both to survive on the job and spend time with their kids," she says.

Others have come to the same conclusion, and new "arrangements" are springing up to substitute for services parents formerly provided or to help parents use their time with their children more effectively. The initiators of these programs are often parents themselves, in self-help groups; longtime community service agencies, such as the Y's, Scouts, or Camp Fire; churches; public schools; and teachers and their Associations. They work alone or in various combinations, depending on local practice and needs.

Some of the "programs" are simply efforts by individual teachers, acting on their own initiative.

Doris Kenison, 1983 Utah teacher of the year and first grade teacher in Springville, encourages parents in their role as teachers. "It's only at home," she tells them, "that your child can get sustained individual attention. Give him or her 10 to 15 minutes a night on schoolwork."

When parents understand their role at home, Kenison explains, "they also understand that they can help their child by coming to school—even if they must take time from work—for an hour three times a year. They work with a small group of children in their child's class."

State and local NEA affiliates provide family-oriented programs to members—sometimes even directly to parents.

► Associations sponsor in-service courses and workshops on the family. Typical titles are "The Single Parent and the Schools," from this year's Oklahoma Education Association fall instructional conference, and "The Changing Family: A Challenge to Teachers," from a recent annual meeting of NEA-Alaska.

► In Texas, the Alamo Heights Teachers Association has offered free evening courses on parenting since 1979.

► Indiana's Fort Wayne Teachers Association, in cooperation with the local cable television station, sponsors a homework hotline twice weekly. Four teachers are on camera and one answers telephone calls during the live television production every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon.

Within the traditional school program, the public schools have responded to families' difficulties by establishing high school courses on "responsible parenting." They have also expanded counseling programs to include group and peer counseling. Counselors sometimes aim these programs directly at kids whose problems arise mainly at home:

► Joan Kvidahl, a school social worker in Laramie, Wyo., instituted 14 half-hour group counseling sessions for youngsters going through their parents' divorces. She had found out about the students—all fifth grade classmates—when their teacher, Association member Lynn Martin, noticed their common plight.

► Smokey Hill High School in Aurora, Colo., has a peer counseling program, in which volunteers from the junior and senior classes, approved by a selection committee, counsel classmates—and receive academic credit for doing so. Problems too serious for the peer counselors are turned over to the school counselors.

► Barbara Weiner, a counselor at Hillside Elementary School in Berwyn, Pa., uses "bibliocounseling" in a special divorce workshop she offers students during the year. Working with the school librarian, she provides brief materials for these "children of divorce" to read, then has them discuss their feelings about the problem addressed.

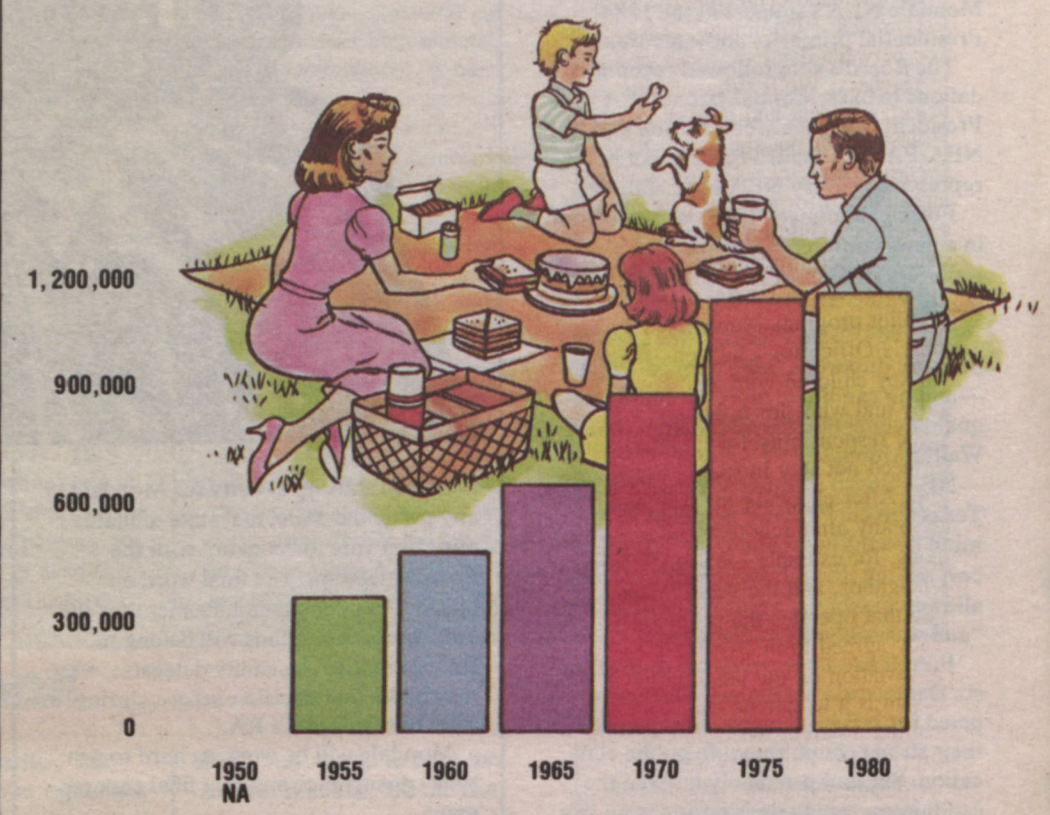
Outside the traditional school program and school hours are programs for so-called latch-key children, the estimated six million youngsters between the ages of 6 and 13 who have no adult at home after school. Schools and other nonprofit organizations—along with employers and "for-profit" centers—operate them.

Extended school day programs typically provide supervision for children in groups after school until, say, 6 p.m., when parents pick them up. Some programs also operate early in the morning. Many of the nonprofit ones are located in school buildings, although other groups than the school district may actually run them. An NEA-backed bill introduced into Congress this year would encourage public schools to stay open after hours. The bill provides grants to local public and nonprofit agencies willing to set up school-based programs.

According to the School-Age Child Care Project at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, the best after-school programs provide students with a "home base," from which they can go out to activities, such as a library story hour, hockey practice, or piano lessons—much as they might from their own homes. The idea is to use existing community resources rather than have the program duplicate them. The centers do have their own staff members, however—ideally, people trained in recreation and child development.

School-based extended day programs have advantages for regular school faculty members, too. Association member Leslie Egan, a second-grade teacher at

Number of Children Involved in Divorces



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

A Word from the Next Generation of Parents

Reasonably random opinions from a sampling of high school students about their futures as heads of families:

"To support a family these days you have to have two incomes. I think it can only hurt a family if there's not enough money coming in."—*Jill Hanson, a senior at Frank B. Kellogg High School in Little Canada, Minn.*

"I plan to have a career and work even if I get married. Having a job makes you feel like you're your own person. You don't have to depend on anyone else."—*Kim Fisher, a junior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Md.*

"I want my wife to work. I think a wife needs a break and will be more happy if she's working. My mother always worked."—*Scot Maness, a senior at Delta High School in Delta Junction, Alaska.*

"Growing up in a family where just my father worked, I think I would want my wife to stay home. I don't think it's good for kids to come home with their own key and let themselves into an empty house."—*David Bradshaw, a sophomore at Stonewall Jackson High in Manassas, Va.*

"There's no reason to be married just because you have children. I'm not going to put up with what my mother has."—*A female middle school student from New Mexico, paraphrased by her teacher.*

. . . CHANGING NEEDS

IN FLUX & KIDS ARE COPING

Lawrence Elementary School, site of a parent-organized center in Brookline, Mass., notes: "Communication can develop between day care teachers and regular teachers. We'll stop and chat about a particular student and how she's doing and whether or not she had a good day."

Neighborhood check-in programs are alternatives to formal day care programs for latch-key children. Typical is a new service offered this year to youngsters 9 to 14 years old in Fairfax County, Va. This pilot program—supervised by the county's Office for Children—matches latch-key children with adults who live nearby and who, for a fee, are willing to assume responsiblity for them. Older children need not stay in such a neighbor's home. After checking in, they can participate in any after-school activities—music lessons, for example—that their parents, the neighbor, and the neighborhood group that operates the program have already agreed to in writing.

A variation on the neighborhood check-in is a telephone check-in. Instead of calling a parent when they get home, unsupervised youngsters telephone some other designated adult, often a staff member at a nearby extended day center.

In Scottdale, Ga., the DeKalb County Library makes latch-key children especially welcome right after school to play games as well as do homework.

Survival skill courses are another alternative for latch-key children. In one Kansas program that is typical of those cropping up across the country, the Johnson County Mental Health Center trains school nurses, counselors, and principals to teach survival skills to parents and children together. Topics covered include how to use stoves safely, how to put out a fire, and how to deal with a stranger at the door or on the phone.

The good news from all these programs is that parent and community organizations have taken the initiative to help create new "arrangements" that will ensure that children don't pay all the bills for society's experiments with new lifestyles.

For many children, however, the arrangements aren't being created fast enough. These children don't have access to good programs. Association members are well positioned to identify such children and help get the right programs started for them. The resource list *(see box)* gives national sources of information. Members and parents should have no trouble identifying local counterparts.

That 1950s family in the big station wagon will never return to live up to its stereotype—though some American families may try to be a little more like it. (The pendulum always swings back at least a little.) But many of the novel child care arrangements that families and others have developed in the last decade will become part of a new tradition. If they're done right, the new arrangements may be as indispensable to U.S. families in the late 20th century as that other part-time parent—the nanny—was to upper-class British families in the 19th.

—Nancy R. Needham

Fred Mirlani

An 'extended day' program organized by parents and coordinated by Diane Genco (left) offers supervision after school to these Brookline, Mass., youngsters. With Genco is second grade teacher Leslie Egan.

Number of Children Living With One Parent Only

1970 8,199,000

1982 13,701,000

Mother Only

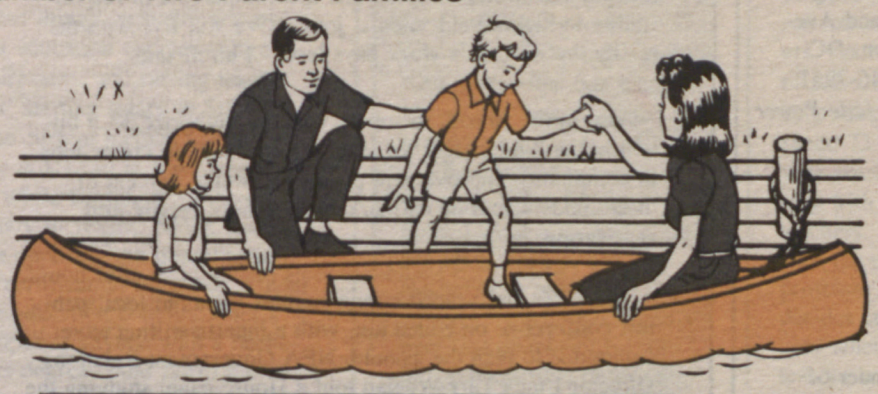
1970 7,451,000

1982 12,512,000

Projection: Nearly half the children born in 1980 will live in single-parent families before they turn 18.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Number of Two-Parent Families



1970 44,436,000

1983 49,947,000*

*Nearly 10 percent of children of two-parent families live with one natural parent and one stepparent.

Number of Two-Parent Families With Both Parents Working

1970 20,327,000

1983 25,387,000

Number of Children With Both Parents Working

1983 31,000,000

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

RESOURCES

Child Care for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall, Carrboro, NC 27510.

Child Care Information Exchange, Roger Neugebauer, editor, P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, WA 98052.

Cooperative Extension Service. For information on family-oriented programs operated jointly by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, state land-grant universities, and local governments, contact your local city or county Cooperative Extension office.

A Growing Crisis: Disadvantaged Women and Their Children. **U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.** Clearinghouse Publication No. 78, May 1983. 66 pp. Free. USCCR Warehouse, 621 N. Payne St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

Half a Childhood: Time for School-Age Child Care. $7.95 plus $1 postage and handling. **School Age Notes,** P.O. Box 120674, Nashville, TN 37212.

In Charge: A Complete Handbook for Kids with Working Parents. Kathy S. Kyte. Knopf, 1983. Paperback, $5.95.

National Association for Child Care Management, 1800 M St., N.W.,Washington, DC 20036.

The Official Kids' Survival Kit: How To Do Things on Your Own. Elaine Chaback and Pat Fortunato. Little, Brown, 1981. Paperback, $8.95.

Prepared for Today. **Boy Scouts of America.** Booklet for boys and girls, 5-11, who spend time at home alone. Three editions: English, English/Spanish, English/Vietnamese/Lao. 40¢ each from local Boy Scout councils.

PTA Today, February 1983 issue devoted to "Pressures on Youth." $1. **National PTA,** 700 N. Rush St., Chicago, IL 60611.

School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual. Auburn House Publishing Co., Order Dept., 131 Clarendon St., Boston, MA 02116. List price, $12.95; NEA member price, $9.75 if order specifies "NEA price." Prepay individual orders by check or major credit card (give card number and expiration date).

School-Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181.

Streamlined Seminar, Vol. 1, No.1, October 1982. Entire newsletter issue devoted to "Helping Children Cope with Divorce." 50¢ each; 2-9 copies, 45¢ each; 10 or more copies, 40¢ each. Orders must be prepaid. **National Association of Elementary School Principals,** 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091.

Survival Guide for Busy Parents: Help Children Do Well at School While You Do Well on the Job. **The Home and School Institute, Inc.,** Special Projects Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. $12 prepaid.

Prepared with the cooperation of the School-Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

HUMAN RIGHTS

South Africa: 'Improving' The Less Than Minimal

"It is of no avail for the Bantu [African] to receive a training which shows him the green pastures of a society in which he is not allowed to graze."

—Hendrick Verwoerd, prime minister of South Africa, 1956-1965.

The white minority in the Republic of South Africa—16 percent of the population—has ferociously repressed the rights of black Africans, and of "Coloureds" (people of mixed ancestry) and Indians as well. It determines where they may live and what occupations they may pursue in what classes of jobs.

To enforce its policies of apartheid (total segregation of the races), the white minority jails dissidents and harasses less offensive persons by house arrest and "banning," which prescribes where the persons may travel and whom they may associate with. In some cases, it restricts them to their homes during certain hours each day.

Blacks must carry passes, which often contain government orders that restrict their movements. Black nationalist political parties have been outlawed, and organizing suppressed.

Apartheid has clear effects on education, too. Each racial group has its own separate school system, and levels of support vary widely.

In 1980, only about half of all Africans ever started school, 34 percent of those reached high school, and 9 percent took high school final exams. That year the government passed a law making education free and compulsory for African children. The law still awaits serious enforcement.

The latest South African government statistics show some improvement in education for Africans. How has the government brought about this "progress"? Primarily by ceasing to take into account the children in four "Bantustans"—severely impoverished areas which the government has declared independent. The residents of these areas no longer have any rights of South African citizenship.

The World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) is closely watching the situation in South Africa. Through its affiliation with this world group, NEA supports the African Teachers Association of South Africa.

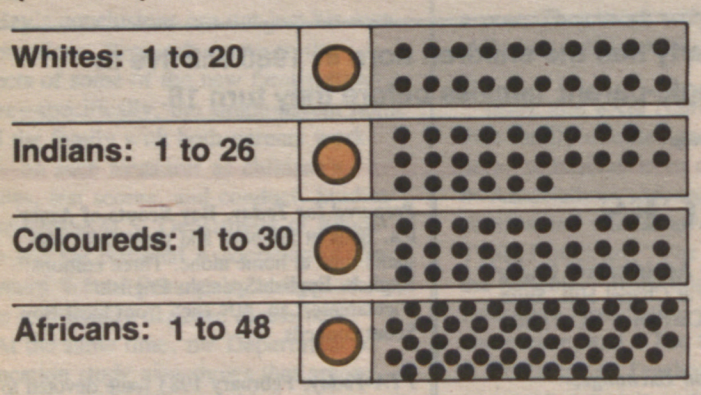
In this country, one group working to end the system of apartheid by ending U.S. economic and political support for South Africa is the Washington Office on Africa. Readers who want to find out more about the apartheid system of education or who want to help improve education for South Africa's African, Coloured, and Indian students can contact this organization at 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20002 or call (202) 546-7961.

—Jane Power

South African government spending on education per capita (latest figures, 1978-79)

Whites: $833 Indians: $411 Coloureds: $259 Africans: $82

Teacher-pupil ratios in South Africa (1978-79)



Commission Settles Dispute Over Reagan's Hiring Practices

The Reagan Administration is doing about as much to narrow the "gender gap" as it is to promote equal opportunities for minorities—not enough to notice.

All last winter, as women's and civil rights groups refuted President Reagan's repeated claims that his Administration had exceeded previous ones in appointing minorities and women to federal office, the news media had a field day over the controversy. Commentators cited various sets of statistics to support almost any editorial position.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights finally clarified things in June with its report *Equal Opportunity in Presidential Appointments*—issued while waiting for the Senate to act on President Reagan's recommendation that three of the Commission's members be replaced.

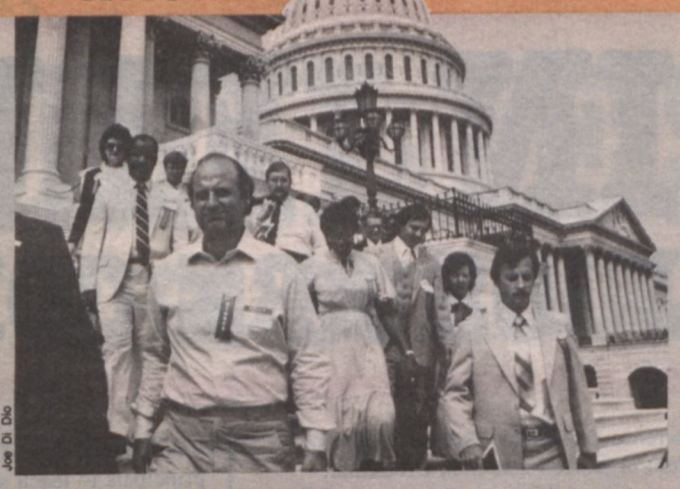
The report observed that while each recent Administration in Washington has outdone its predecessor in appointing women and minorities to high-level positions, the Reagan appointments have reversed this trend. The Commission called on the President to make a major effort to appoint more women and minorities during the remainder of his term.

Responding to news coverage of the report, President Reagan claimed once again that his Administration has aggressively sought minorities for government jobs.

In letters sent to each cabinet agency over the summer, the Commission praised the records of two departments—Education and Health and Human Services—but noted that four others—Defense, State, Labor, and Agriculture—have placed almost no minorities or women in top-level posts.

—Marian Clayton

WASHINGTON WATCH



Joe Di Dio

NEA lobbyists faced their biggest test of the young school year on Capitol Hill in mid-September—and aced it. Relying heavily on some 90 Congressional Contact Team members *(above)* from around the country, NEA lobbyists helped persuade a majority of the House of Representatives to raise the authorization level by $1 billion on key **federal education programs,** including Chapter 1 (education of disadvantaged students), impact aid, vocational and adult education, and education of the handicapped. The Senate must still concur.

Ultimately, NEA and its congressional allies are seeking approval of a $16.1 billion appropriation for aid to education in fiscal 1984—some $3 billion more than the President requested.

✔ The Administration may attempt to push a **tuition tax credit** bill through the Senate before Thanksgiving. Such a measure, allowing tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools, could be tacked on as an amendment to some unrelated piece of legislation.

✔ Lately President Reagan has taken to holding Rose Garden press conferences and other media events hyping his support for women and minorities. Meanwhile over at the **Education Department**, Reagan appointees are busy ridding the agency of programs and people responsible for promoting the concerns of women, Blacks, and Native Americans. Five staffers—all women—were ousted from the Women's Educational Equity Act Program this fall, including the director. The two remaining staffers are men. NEA is working with Congress to stop this assault on key ED programs.

✔ Equity for women, in the form of the **Equal Rights Amendment** that's been reintroduced in Congress, was also the topic of House Judiciary Committee hearings this fall. NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell testified that "inequities resulting from sex and race are first among the concerns" of teachers and pointed out that female school support personnel face sex discrimination in the form of low pay for 'women's' jobs that are comparable in responsibility to higher-paid 'men's' jobs. "We still live with the reality that women's work pays less," Futrell said.

✔ Also in the House, members voted to authorize $3.5 billion in the 1984 budget for local governments to create jobs in community improvement projects. Twenty percent of these funds would be earmarked for **school repair and renovation.**

✔ And NEA has voiced strong support for a national **summit conference** on education, with a bipartisan executive committee to plan the agenda. NEA Government Relations Director Linda Tarr-Whelan told a House panel studying the idea that a summit could help develop workable solutions to problems pinpointed by the many recent studies on education.

✔ Should **employees' fringe benefits** be completely tax exempt? NEA says yes, but David Stockman says no. Stockman, director of the Office of Management and Budget, has put forward an Administration scheme to start treating health care costs and almost all other employee "bennies" as taxable income. NEA isn't alone in its opposition: Blue Cross/Blue Shield, the health insurance associations, the AFL-CIO, even the national Chamber of Commerce are arguing that taxation of fringes would mean economic hardship for low- and middle-income workers and could lead to reduced health care protection.

State Side

SOUTHEAST

The Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) is making an all-out effort to repeal the state's 1981 home-study law that "circumvents compulsory attendance laws and makes a mockery of efforts to upgrade education," reports LAE President Jesse Scott.

The two-year-old law allows parents—who aren't required to meet standards to which teachers are subjected—to teach their children at home.

"We have a number of concerns about home study," Scott says. "Who monitors students' progress? Are the learning materials comparable to those used in public schools? Are students adequately prepared for college or adulthood? What happens when a child reenters public school?"

LAE feels that one reason some parents choose to educate their children at home is to avoid public school desegregation efforts. Of the 929 approved applications so far for home study, 189 are from Baton Rouge—a parish that's implementing a desegregation plan.

NORTHEAST

A broad "reform" package proposed by the state education commissioner and endorsed by the governor offers good news and bad news, warns the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA).

Governor Thomas Kean has announced a sweeping plan to attract professionals from other fields into teaching by, among other things, virtually wiping out education coursework requirements and raising teachers' starting salary to $18,500. The current median starting salary is $13,091 in New Jersey.

While lauding the proposed salary increases, NJEA leaders are opposing the liberalization of certification standards. Under the education commissioner's proposal, anyone with a bachelors degree could fulfill a one-year teaching internship, after which he or she could become certified to teach if a committee of educators within the district, including the principal, supervisor, and other teachers, so recommended.

Objects NJEA President Edithe Fulton: "Before any beginner is placed in front of a classroom full of children, he or she should have professional training—training that is totally absent from this plan. The plan is therefore unacceptable."

Other elements of the proposed package include creation of a merit pay or master teacher program to reward outstanding teachers, the requirement that bilingual students pass a statewide high school graduation test in English, and a new emphasis on classroom discipline.

MIDWEST

In late September, Illinois Governor Jim Thompson signed three Illinois Education Association-backed bills designed to provide significant improvements in the state's public schools.

A "quality education" bill—sponsored by two IEA-endorsed legislators—stiffens the requirements for high school graduation. The new minimum standards include three years of English, two years of math (one of which can be in computer science), one year of science, and one year of music, art, foreign language, or vocational education.

The second piece of IEA-drafted legislation will allow school districts to offer before- and after-school programs for children of working parents. A third bill increases funds for school lunch programs.

IEA made support for public education its number one goal this year, seizing the current wave of public interest and moving ahead to write and lobby for the bills without the aid of other state education groups.

"We took action, the legislature agreed, and the governor signed," Weaver reports.

OKLAHOMA OVERHAUL

Putting Teeth into Teacher Education

Steve Jennings

Tulsa consulting teacher Tina Marshall (foreground) observes and (inset) counsels "her" last year's entry-level teacher, Kim Hairston. This year the two TCTA/OEA members are colleagues once again—with Hairston now fully certified—at Columbus Elementary.

In 1980—three years before all the "national excellence" reports hit the news—Oklahoma teachers persuaded the state legislature to give them a voice in designing teacher education.

For current elementary and secondary classroom teachers, House Bill 1706, as the law is still called, offers, for the first time, teacher-controlled staff development. Teachers nominated by the local Association hold the majority of seats on each school district's staff development committee (six teachers to two administrators and two parents).

This committee proposes the annual plan of state-funded workshops and other activities through which teachers can obtain the required 75 in-service "points" over five years—or be subject to dismissal. Before the school board can make it official, the proposed annual plan must pass muster with the district's teachers, who put it to a vote.

In Ada, teachers "rolled up a total of 1,694 workshop points" last year, reports Ada Education Association IPD Chair Harol Deane Parsons—"more than they'll need in five years!"

Current teachers also participate in the new, five-year certification process, as consultants to entry-year teachers. Recruited with the help of Association building reps, consulting teachers must spend 72 hours during the year observing and conferring with their entry-year teachers. They also serve, with the principal and college professor, on the panel that decides at the end of the entry year whether the new teacher will be certified.

A key principle that underlay the law was that state money would be available to pay for the extra burdens it put on teachers. This has not always been the case.

Consulting teachers do get an extra $500 a year, for example, but they still have to find time in their own schedules—often their planning periods—to observe and confer. College faculty members who serve on entry-year teachers' committees are getting neither extra money nor reduced teaching loads.

Still, state money for the in-service courses is there, and the principle is established that good teacher education costs money. Also, Bill 1706 permits local associations to realize in practice what they've always had in potential—leadership in instructional as well as employee welfare concerns.

MID-ATLANTIC

Virginia Governor Charles Robb has joined the Virginia Education Association's latest community relations campaign. Television viewers around the state may now see the governor in two brief commercials suggesting that parents ask their children about school, check their children's homework, and get to know their children's teachers.

The commercials, which show Robb helping his two teenaged daughters with their homework, imply that if the governor has time to do these things, surely any parent does.

VEA's 1983-84 "Schools Are Giving More Than Ever" campaign—of which the commericals are a part—also features radio spots that introduce individual teachers to the public, describe the goals of education, and urge parents to support schoolwork.

"Governor Robb's stature in Virginia as an important and recognizable figure lends credibility to our efforts to get parents—and communities at large—to take a more active interest in their local schools," says VEA President Brenda Cloyd. "We're very pleased that he has joined with us in this campaign."

PACIFIC

Parents and teachers in 50 Oregon districts breathed a sigh of relief in late September as voters approved new tax levies that meant more money for their schools.

One district in Lincoln County reopened its schools, which were closed after an earlier tax hike was rejected, and 16 additional districts facing shutdowns were able to continue operations.

But the news wasn't so good in six other districts, where tax levies were defeated. In one, a win was needed to meet the September payroll.

One of three states without a sales tax, Oregon draws 60 percent of its school funds from local property taxes. And so far the state legislature hasn't come up with any remedies.

Now time is running out. In the November 1984 elections the state faces a fourth attempt to enact a Proposition-13-type tax limit initiative.

"Nobody's complaining about the schools," says OEA President Sandy Ellis. "But the voters want property tax relief. We've got to have *real* tax reform to take the heat off property owners without cutting back on education and other public services."

Local Look

NEW JERSEY

The Camden Education Association has won a $500 Hilda Maehling Fellowship from NEA to finance the development of a self-help program aimed at restoring teacher self-esteem and self-confidence.

The 1,500 members of the local, like their counterparts in urban schools across the country, suffer from teacher stress and burnout — as well as the pressure of changes that leave them feeling less in control than ever, according to Therese Marlin, project coordinator, who teaches academically talented fourth and fifth graders at the Yorkship School in Camden.

The project, entitled "Teachertorium," calls for the development of a 40-week self-help program, plus a handbook for the general membership.

The handbook will help teachers cope with societal pressures, reduce emotional stress, discover relaxation techniques, and find satisfaction in achieving limited goals during the day.

TEXAS

"We teachers in Fort Worth think the students we produce are good," says Nancy Hilger, immediate past president of the 2,800-member Fort Worth Classroom Teachers Association. In fact, FWCTA members are so enthusiastic about the programs of their school district—"one of the most progressive in the area," Hilger claims—that last year they put together a slide/tape show to demonstrate just what Fort Worth's 68,000 students can do.

The 17-minute presentation highlights special curriculums, such as accelerated academics, magnet schools, and programs for the handicapped and the musically talented. Association leaders take it along when they appear on TV talk shows or speak to groups such as PTAs, church and homeowner associations, or student teachers from nearby colleges.

CALIFORNIA

Together: Parents and Teachers Are Partners. That's what the Santa Ana Education Association (SAEA) calls its bilingual newsletter for the community.

With 34,000 students, the Santa Ana school district is the ninth largest in the state. More than 30 languages are spoken there, and 90 percent of entering kindergartners speak no English. In a community with little to hold it together, the SAEA newsletter can make a big difference.

It began last year, with two issues going to 750 families. This year SAEA hopes to send six issues to 2,000 families.

And the newsletter won't be just bilingual for long, says SAEA president Margo Allen: "We want to add an edition in a Southeast Asian language to the English and Spanish sometime this year. And in five years we hope to be publishing in several more languages."

Each issue has a lead article on an important topic—legislative issues, say, or school board elections—plus "Meet the Teacher" features and a column suggesting free or inexpensive local activities parents can share with their children.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The Greenville County Educaation Association has kicked off a 15-month "Greenville County Pride" campaign—planned to coincide with the Association's political action drive and to carry over through the 1984 November elections.

As the initial activity, GCEA unveiled several billboards on major traffic arteries. The Association provided interested guests with a smock and hoisted them on a scaffold to sign their names on one billboard that reads, "My Pride Is Showing." Other billboards say "The GCEA Promotes County Pride—Join Us," "This Is Greenville County Pride" (with a photograph of the county spelling bee winner and the teacher), and "If you have pride, you will register and vote in November."

"We hope our campaign will improve relations among educators, parents, and the business community," says GCEA President Jo Ann DuBose. "We want everyone to see that quality education enhances local businesses and life in general."

FLORIDA

NEA's newest higher education affiliate, the United Faculty of Florida, was one of the two locals that contributed most to the Association membership growth that won the Florida Teaching Profession (FTP-NEA) an award at the 1983 NEA Representative Assembly.

"Getting new members in a right-to-work state is difficult," says Roy Weatherford, UFF's newly elected president, "but our faculty joined as a result of the support given by our new national affiliate, NEA." UFF was an American Federation of Teachers affiliate until last year.

UFF represents 5,000 faculty and professional employees in the state university system, 2,000 graduate assistants at the University of Florida and the University of South Florida, four community colleges, and two independent colleges.

"We are particularly proud of our new contract for the graduate assistants," reports Weatherford. "This contract is the result of more than a decade of struggle. It provides, for the first time, basic rights for graduate assistants to receive timely assignments, reasonable workloads, and leave for illness."

MARYLAND

The Prince George's County Educators Association has been locked in a battle royal this fall with its school board. Despite eight months of negotiations, teachers' two-year contract expired in September with no new agreement in the offing.

An independent arbitrator recommended that the teachers accept a one-year contract with no cost-of-living raise but a reduction of two days in the work year. The arbitrator also suggested that the school board grant PGCEA binding arbitration of grievances.

PGCEA accepted the arbitrator's recommendations, but the school board rejected the arbitration provision, despite the fact that their negotiators had agreed to it in principle earlier.

PGCEA is determined not to give in. Says President Paul Pinsky, "It's one thing to be altruistic; another to be masochistic." At press time the county's 6,200 teachers continue to work without a contract.

IN HARVARD'S BACKYARD . . .

Cambridge Kids Go 'High Tech'

Formally launching the Cambridge "Computers for Kids" plan are (from left) Superintendent of Schools William C. Lannon, U.S. Sen. Paul Tsongas, Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci, and Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis.

Before a visionary new plan to expand student access to computers was even off the drawing board, top political leaders in Cambridge, Mass., were looking to the local teachers Association for help in turning the plan into reality.

Cambridge Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci—a strong union supporter—invited Susan Noonan Forster, president of the Cambridge Teachers Association (CTA), to serve on the board of directors of The School for the Future—along with such heavyweights as Senators Ted Kennedy and Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.), House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.), Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, Harvard President Derek Bok, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology President Paul Gray.

In summoning Forster's expertise, political leaders hoped to get teachers' perspective on a new program designed to provide students of all races and socio-economic levels with equal access to computer-oriented education.

The School for the Future, housed in 10 classrooms of the John M. Tobin Elementary School in Cambridge, is designed to integrate computer technology with a traditional curriculum in a magnet school setting.

Some 150 students from kindergarten through eighth grade were selected by lottery to attend the new school-within-a-school when it opened its doors in September. They have access to 30 computers, thanks to an innovative funding mix of corporate contributions and grants from federal, state, and city agencies.

"Computers for Kids," as the school's plan is referred to, called for the recruitment and training of faculty from throughout the city's public schools. Faculty drawn from the many nearby universities and high technology firms are also available on an adjunct basis.

The Association played an active role in all the planning for the new school. "We had a concern that the emphasis on computers not overshadow the teacher–student relationship," says CTA President Forster. "We didn't want them simply turning out little scientists and mathematicians. We stressed the development of the 'whole child.'"

IN THE CLASSROOM

Writing To Learn...

An old and lame axiom—some pompous philosopher's paradox—maintains that we don't speak in order to *express* our thoughts but rather in order to *discover* them.

Pedantic gibberish, right? Well, sure, but like a lot of gibberish, there's a grain of truth nestled within it. And there's even more truth hidden in a similar adage about writing: we don't write to *display* understanding but to *acquire* understanding. Writing teaches.

That simple fact explains why students need as much writing in the content areas as possible. The process of *composing* their thoughts moves students away from the muddle of isolated facts toward the order of integrated knowledge. That's usually called *understanding*.

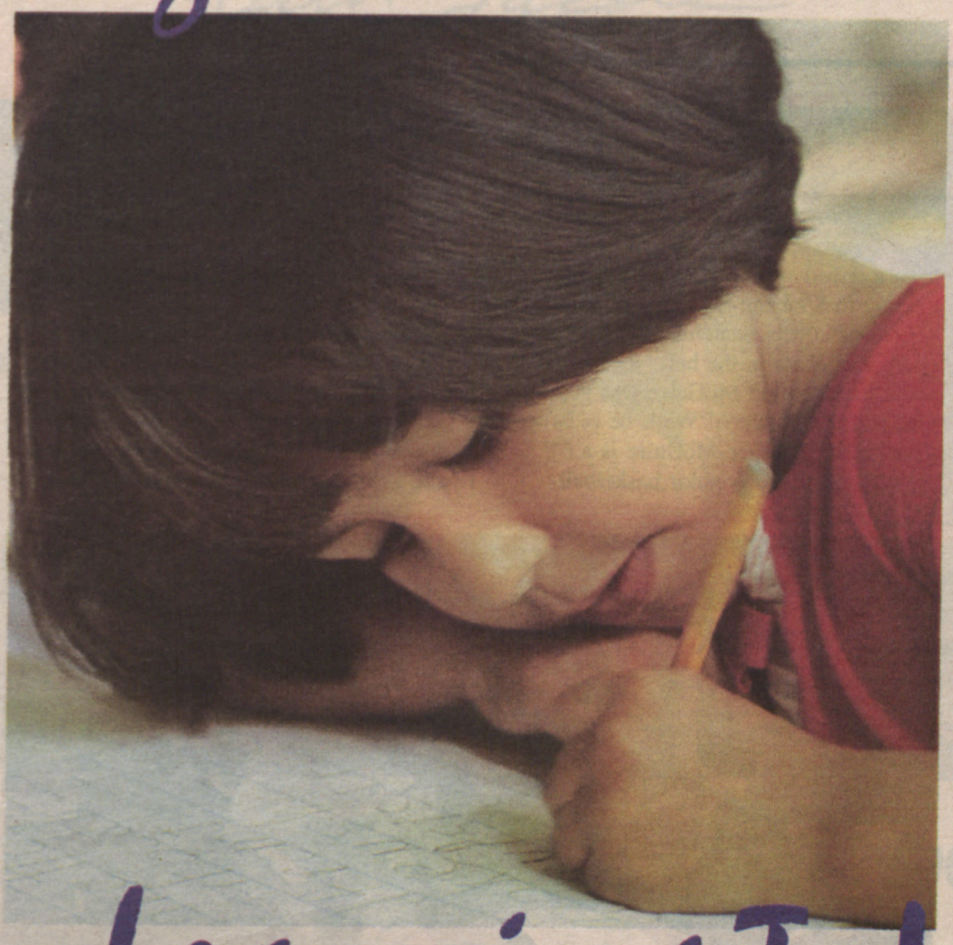
More student writing in courses other than English should not be thought of as some dreaded add-on—as just another burden for already overburdened teachers. Nor should it be seen as an invasion of the English teacher's domain. It's neither. Requiring more writing is simply a way to help students organize, synthesize, and so truly comprehend subject matter.

When studying the Amazon River Basin, for example, the teacher who asks students to write vividly about a lazy journey up the Amazon will help them understand the river far better than the teacher who falls back on some old fill-in-the-blank/try-to-stay-awake/eyes-on-your-own-paper method.

Similarly, when students write imaginatively about scientific principles—say, using their knowledge from a unit on fuels to develop a futuristic tale about transportation—they'll learn a lot more than if they merely sink their gums into some pablumated textbook.

Why then do so many teachers resist incorporating content-area writing into their weekly lessons? Stubbornly persistent misconceptions are part of the problem. Too many teachers think the task requires some kind of arcane knowledge—or at least highly specialized training. It just isn't so.

To use content-area writing effectively you don't have to be an expert in grammar or a whiz at diagramming sentences or explaining the difference between a participle and a gerund. You don't have to be a walking thesaurus, and you don't need an encyclopedic grasp of contemporary usage and style. In fact, your limitations may prove to be virtues: you won't frighten students with the notion that writing is somehow an "unnatural" activity reserved for the few, the gifted, the talented, the inspired, the muse-ical.



Joe Di Dio

...Learning To Write

But if you have trouble shaking off the grammar bogeyman, try the advice of the president of the National Council of Teachers of English, Stephen N. Tchudi: *Keep content at the center of the writing process.* This principle, insists Tchudi, gives clarity of content top priority.

Tchudi emphasizes that much of teaching writing in the content areas "consists not in telling students *how* to write, but in creating situations where they *want* to write." That's why it's so important, when making a writing assignment, to build in an "audience." When you ask students not merely to explain a topic but to explain it *to* someone, you'll notice an immediate difference. The element of reality works wonders.

Consider the contrast, for example, between these two assignments:

► "Explain the impact of technology on day-to-day living."

► "Convince a skeptic that technology has a constant and dramatic effect on our lives. You may need to begin by convincing yourself. So start by addressing the following questions: What would life be like without shoelaces? Where did shoelaces come from? How have they improved? Can you invent a better shoelace?"

Notice how much more alive the second assignment is. Small wonder that student response will be more lively. The concreteness of the assignment will spur even the most stuporous student toward creativity.

And—the real bonus—technology is no longer likely to seem a foreign topic. The writing assignment—the *right* one—demystifies technology. Suddenly you have students who understand that even if they never see a laser or sit at a computer terminal, they are personally touched by technology. So they're ready—in fact have already begun—to learn.

This approach can work at any level in any discipline. Consider, for example, a history, social studies, health, or P.E. class. And think of how much interest and understanding you can generate by asking students to investigate, then write about, folk cures for common physical ailments. (Why does chicken soup work—for some—as a cold remedy? Why is breathing into a paper bag a way to get rid of hiccups? Why do people feed a cold and starve a fever? Or is it the other way around?)

Once again this assignment leaves the emphasis where it should be—on content. And you'll witness a small (or maybe not so small) miracle: students will begin to *want* to communicate. After all their research, they're not likely to be satisfied with some shoddy rehash of their findings.

They might even begin to see that those deadly grammar and syntax rules deserve some study time. And that's your cue: time for some quick coaching on the mechanics of writing. And time for the lesson that good writing means good *re*writing.

You're likely to meet little crankiness. After all, you've given your students a special gift—a reason to write. A reason to write well.

—Carl Luty

Good-Bye to Eggless Omelets

These days no one seems satisfied with the way Johnny and Jane write—not parents, not administrators, not the media, not Johnny and Jane themselves, and certainly not teachers. There are no quick fixes for this crisis. But one of the most exciting ways teachers can help students become more accomplished writers—*and* better learners—is through writing in the content areas.

Of course, all writing has content. You can no more write without content than you can make an omelet without eggs. But too often that's what we've asked—or come close to asking—students to do. We've isolated them within the often eggless land of language arts exercises. And then we complained that their omelets were bland and without substance.

Recent developments are yanking us out of this rusty and rather nasty habit. And NEA is ready to help. ***Writing in the Content Areas: The NEA In-Service Training Program*** consists of 40 specific resources to help teachers of all subjects at *all* grade levels in the practical techniques of teaching writing while teaching subject matter.

Stephen N. Tchudi, an English professor at Michigan State University and 1983-84 president of the National Council of Teachers of English, developed this kit of 12 professional development workshops for NEA. Dr. Tchudi personally field tested the package in a large number of workshops to assure the validity, practicality, and success of his basic approaches. In addition, over 100 educators at all levels, from all parts of the country, carefully reviewed the materials to assure their universality and adaptability.

Key components in the package are the three books titled ***Writing in the Content Areas:***

► ***Elementary School***, by Stephen N. and Susan J. Tchudi, 64 pp. (#0776-x-00-D), $4.95

► ***Middle School/Junior High***, by Stephen N. Tchudi and Margie C. Huerta, 64 pp. (#0777-8-00-D), $4.95

► ***Senior High School***, by Stephen N. Tchudi and Joanne M. Yates, 80 pp. (#0778-6-00-D), $5.95.

Other items in the program include filmstrips, audiotapes, monographs, and reproducible handouts.

Order by writing to the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516, or by calling 203-934-2669. For further information on the entire ***Writing in the Content Areas*** package, write the NEA Professional Library, Dept. WCA, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

LIFE AFTER WASHINGTON

NEA Leaders Back Home Again

McGUIRE: 'As If He Never Left'

Mark Peterson

In September 1982, NEA President Willard McGuire visited Maplewood Junior High in North St. Paul and told his former colleagues there, "I'll see you next year."

"I said, 'I'll believe it when it happens,'" recalls English teacher Marge Grandlienard.

It *did* happen. McGuire completed his term as NEA president in August of this year and, after nine years in full-time national Association office, returned with his wife Helen to Minnesota. His reentry into teaching meant a $30,000 cut in salary.

Art teacher Ed Sewell remembers when McGuire taught Spanish and coached basketball and football at Maplewood.

"I'm surprised that he came back, but I guess I shouldn't be. He's happy here," Sewell says.

Special ed teacher Carolyn Glumach calls McGuire "a man of his word."

"He always said he'd return," she says. "We kid him a lot about being a rookie and whether or not he'll stick it out, although we know he will."

McGuire, 55, is fortunate in that Maplewood has one of the most senior staffs in the district—so he has returned to old friends. They report that with McGuire's interest and involvement in the school and community, it's as if he never left. A Minnesota native and a Vikings fan, he especially enjoys analyzing football games with his colleagues.

Still the question remains in the minds of many: why did Willard McGuire go back to teaching, after years at the helm of the nation's largest public employee union?

Those who ask haven't seen McGuire with his seventh grade math classes. This is a man who obviously loves teaching.

Getting started in September was no different from beginning any other school year, McGuire says. He marveled at his students' enthusiasm—in spite of the intense early fall heat.

"They seem to have more sense of purpose than students in earlier years," he noticed.

McGuire, who lives within walking distance of the school, taught many of his students' parents. But most of the kids know nothing of his work as an Association leader. In one class, a visit from local news reporters who observed and took pictures aroused his students' interest.

"They're here because I was away for nine years. I worked in Washington, D.C.," McGuire explained.

"That's neat," one student replied. "I have a friend who is going there. She's moving to Spokane."

Other students, watching the photographers take shots in the hall, speculated about the attention McGuire was getting. One had the answer: "Well, he *is* Bruce's grandfather." Bruce McGuire is a 6'3" eighth grader and popular basketball player at Maplewood.

McGuire's work as an Association leader is far from over. He will continue as an executive committee member of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession and as chair of the International Committee To Combat Anti-Semitism and Apartheid.

McGuire is also active in his local—the North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale Education Association. He and other Association members spent long hours this fall meeting with community leaders and getting out mailings on behalf of a local property tax increase.

"The referendum overshadowed everything else," McGuire explained. "Without it, the district faces devastating cuts in programs and staff in the 1984-85 school year."

The mid-September referendum failed by a small margin, but the Association is continuing to get out its message: the schools need financial support.

"Minnesota's history is unique," McGuire points out. "The immigrants who settled here saw education as the ladder to success for their children. In the 1980's, although we face critical economic problems, the long legacy of the state to support its public schools will prevail."

Mark Peterson

With some 140 students, a prep period at the beginning of the day, then five straight classes, hall duty, 20 minutes for lunch, and after-school work with his local Association, McGuire is pleased to be back in the classroom.

"It's intense and confining," he says. "Once that bell rings in the morning, you're either planning for or working with the students—but that's the nature of the teaching experience."

—Marian Clayton

FREITAG: Now a 'Grandteacher'

Brad Bower

When school opened this fall, students at Council Rock Senior High School in Newtown, Pennsylvania, had a new German teacher—former NEA Vice-President Bernie Freitag.

Freitag teaches five classes—grades nine through twelve—and has a ninth grade homeroom.

Getting back into the swing of teaching has kept him busy, he says.

"While I was away, the district adopted a new textbook series. I had to do a quick study on what the students had learned in order to plan for my classes," he explains. "That was a big challenge at the beginning of the year."

Freitag begins his day at 6:45 a.m. to be sure he's ready to meet his first class at 7:40 a.m.

"The early hour isn't terribly different from when I was at NEA," he points out.

What is different is the salary: Freitag took a $20,000 pay cut when he returned to teaching.

"It was heartwarming to return to work with my old friends," Freitag says. "So many people went out of their way to welcome me home."

Of the 180 professional employees at Council Rock, 70 percent worked with Freitag before he moved to Washington in 1979. They elected him Association rep *before* he came home.

Freitag and his wife Mary Anne moved back to Pennsylvania only a few days before school began, so some unpacking chores had to wait. But Association work couldn't: the school superintendent's call for elimination of all elective programs in the next two years demanded immediate attention.

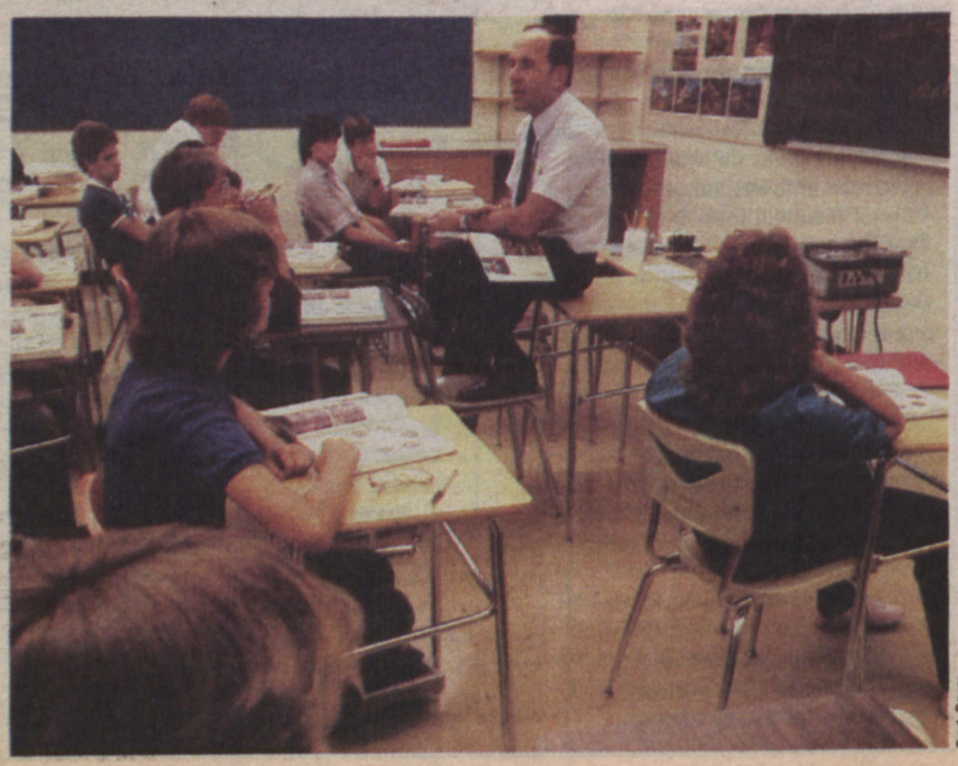
Freitag and the other Association reps are studying the proposal and will make a recommendation before it is implemented.

Freitag is active at the state Association level too. A major focus: the state department of education's plans to improve education by revising the state school code.

Freitag got a surprise the first week he was back in the classroom.

"I've frequently taught siblings of my previous students, but for the first time I'm now teaching children whose *parents* I taught," he says. "I've become a *grand*teacher."

—Marian Clayton


Brad Bower

People

Kevin Graham

Standing Up for the Right To Teach Free of Harassment

In Baggs, Wyoming, in what should be *Sound of Music* country, science teacher **Lois Dougherty Wren** suddenly found the hills were alive with the sounds of strife, harassment, and ultimately of legal argument.

Like many faculty members before and after her, Wren had run afoul of Nyles Spurlock, principal at Baggs, a tiny K-12 school serving some 200 students. In 1979, she filed the first of two grievances about Spurlock's management procedures. From then on Spurlock was, as the kids say, "on her case."

He watched Wren's every move, twice threatening verbally to fire her. He bombarded her with notes "documenting" allegations of insubordination and incompetence—grounds for dismissal in Wyoming. One memorable note reprimanded her for insubordination for leaving her students alone in the school parking lot during a Saturday car wash while she went inside to the lavatory.

The unrelenting pressure—brought on by as many as two or three notes and other incidents a week—took its toll. Wren began to exhibit symptoms of what was later diagnosed as severe depression.

Wren left teaching in the fall of 1981, going on a year's medical leave at her doctor's recommendation. But unlike many other teachers who had succumbed to Spurlock's pressures and resigned, Wren decided to sue. The Wyoming Education Association and NEA supported her through the Unified Legal Services Program.

At the trial in federal district court in Cheyenne last May, Wren's lawyer, Pat Hacker, contended that Spurlock's behavior—and that of the compliant school board and superintendent—had violated Wren's constitutional rights.

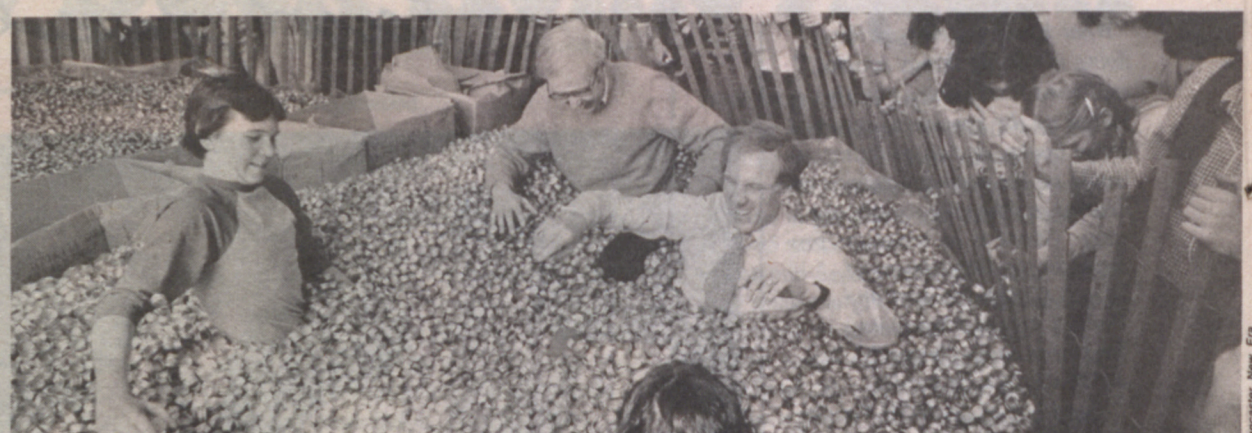
"Lois was never fired," Hacker noted, "but for two years she was *subject* to being fired. A principal can't use procedures designed to ensure fair dismissal—such as documenting insubordination—to retaliate against a teacher who expresses opinions about how the school is run. That violates the teacher's free speech."

Hacker also contended—and had psychiatric testimony to back it up—that "Lois was depressed because the principal was attempting to deliberately create burnout so that she would resign."

The Cheyenne jury accepted all the contentions made in Lois Wren's behalf, awarding her $113,000 in compensatory damages and $7,500 in punitive damages from Spurlock. The superintendent and school board settled out of court, paying Wren an additional $125,000. The total award of $245,500 is one of the largest ever recovered by a teacher.

Epilogue: Fall 1983. Lois Wren, in much improved spirits but still feeling she cannot teach, says, "I'm bitter because I lost my job and my career, but I'm pleased because I made my point: an administrator can't harass a teacher out of her job simply because he doesn't like her."

As for Spurlock, after reprimanding him earlier for misconduct unrelated to Wren, the board fired him last year for actions unrelated either to Wren's case or to the reprimand.



Richard Hertzler, Lancaster New Era

In an effort to get her sixth graders to understand the concept of large numbers, Lancaster, Pa., sixth-grade teacher **Sherry Ostroff** launched them on a project to collect one million of something. They settled on bottlecaps because they're easy to get, store, and count, as well as being recyclable.

The project took six months to complete and quickly expanded beyond the classroom to the foyer of Price Elementary School for needed space.

Offshoots of the activity included a trip to an aluminum plant to see how aluminum is manufactured, how bottlecaps are made, and what the costs of recycling are.

When the millionth cap was collected, U.S. Rep. Bob Walker (R-Pa., at rear of photo) and Lancaster Mayor Arthur E. Morris (right) came to join Ostroff's class for a plunge into the pile of bottlecaps. A local newspaper reporter showed up to cover the festivities.

Encouraging interest in the Holocaust has become a consuming passion for Keene (New Hampshire) State College sociology professor **Charles Hildebrandt.**

After returning from a six-month sabbatical abroad, during which he visited 15 cities with resource centers on the topic, Hildebrandt decided to set up his own resource collection on the Keene State campus.

The center, which opened last winter, houses more than 320 books. Hildebrandt has also put together a curriculum for teaching high school students about the Holocaust.

Hildebrandt, who is not Jewish, believes the Holocaust touches on every area of social life and every institution: family, government, religion, art, ethics, and music. Almost any discipline could benefit from looking at some aspect of the Holocaust, he says.

Medora Hebert

Joel Fairfax has inspired dozens of students to consider careers in the high-flying world of aviation as he's supervised their construction of an aircraft

The Ohio Education Association has filed a million-dollar suit in federal court on behalf of seventh grade life-science teacher **Kathy Pertuset**. OEA charges the Loudonville-Perrysville school board and school administrators with firing her partly because of her lifestyle, and in violation of her First Amendment rights.

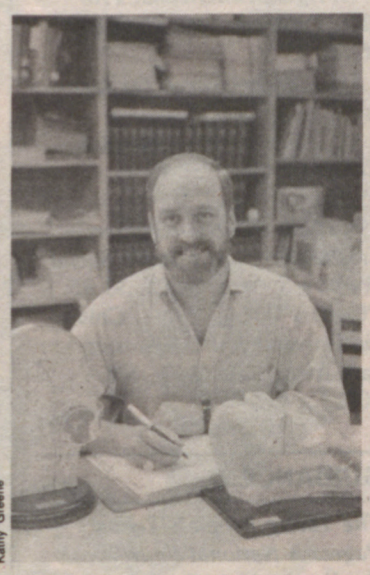
Pertuset, 26, lives in an apartment above a steakhouse and lounge and spends some of her after-school hours in bars. School superintendent Clark

In a nice switch from the pattern of so many teachers leaving the profession these days for greener pastures, North Carolina's **Jim Thompson** has made a mid-career jump *into* classroom teaching. The former loan officer, age 40, started his new career in August as a permanent substitute with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system.

Thompson left the world of finance because he wanted to work with people in a more personal way. He first took a job as a teacher aide in Charlotte, helping to mainstream hearing-impaired children into regular classrooms.

The teachers he worked with were the inspiration that made Thompson decide on a teaching career. "They took their jobs seriously and looked upon their profession with pride," he recalls. "Their sense of responsibility was overwhelming."

Thompson went back to school at Lenoir Rhyne College in North Carolina and graduated last summer. He's certified to teach all subjects to hearing-impaired students in grades K-12 as well as language arts to students with normal hearing in grades 4-9.



Kathy Greene

If it's November, Gloria Baca's students will be working on the Christmas show; they don't start work on the summer show until January.

Officially, Baca is librarian at the New Mexico Boys School in Springer, some 125 miles northeast of Santa Fe. (She's also president of the school's Association affiliate.) Unofficially, Baca is counselor and talent impresario for the 100 or so teenagers, all there by court order (mostly for "correction").

"These young men can be manipulative," Baca says. "To reinforce what they do that's positive, we encourage them to create and perform. They'll do a play like *Twelve Angry Men* and put on songs and skits. The Hispanic kids know how to do *cholo* art— murals of urban street life. We judge both the art and the performances."

Joe Di Dio

Working so closely with these kids, Baca adds, "I become someone they can count on. Sometimes I become like a family member myself—a person who can help find a job or just hear the good news about starting college or getting married."

Experimental Aircraft Association

Frank Heath

right in his classroom.

And now this aviation and metals instructor in Higganum, Conn., is spreading the word about his "build-your-own-plane" curriculum to teachers elsewhere through regional and international industrial arts conferences. His curriculum models are included in teaching literature at several universities.

It takes four to five years and about $14,000 to build the two-seater "Acro Sport II" plane. In the process, students get practice at blueprint reading, as well as in construction using wood, sheet-metal, and fabric.

Fairfax justifies offering the course for both vocational and academic reasons. He's helped a number of students enter aviation careers ranging from aircraft controller to Air Force crew chief. What's more, he says, "There are few programs more demanding of a thorough grounding in the 'three R's' than aircraft construction."

His demonstrated expertise recently earned him and his school an award for "Outstanding Achievement in Aviation Education" from the Experimental Aircraft Association.

Long Beach Press-Telegram / Kent Henderson

Feel like a genius in the classroom but a dummy under the hood of your own car? **Philip Martin** can give you a hand.

Martin teaches occupational auto mechanics in California's Long Beach public schools. But he reaches beyond the high school juniors and seniors in his classes with the textbook he wrote, *Auto Mechanics for the Complete Dummy.* And he practices what he preaches, in his own auto repair shop.

Martin's 200-page book, complete with 30 line drawings, is popular with auto classes in several other California school districts and sells in local bookstores. Now in its second edition, it's published by another Martin enterprise, Motormatics Publications (P.O. Box 91051, Long Beach, CA 90809).

Jeff Swanberg

Lee told her last spring that her contract would not be renewed because she didn't measure up to his personal standards.

When students at C.E. Budd Junior High—where Pertuset taught and coached the volley ball team to an undefeated season last year—heard she had been dismissed, 120 of them signed a petition in protest. OEA has also filed a complaint with the state equal employment opportunity commission, claiming that if Pertuset were a man her lifestyle wouldn't matter.

James Bikar

Rockford (Illinois) Education Association members **Gordon Olson** and **Pam Kaufman,** who dared to "dream an impossible dream," will see that dream come true by Christmas.

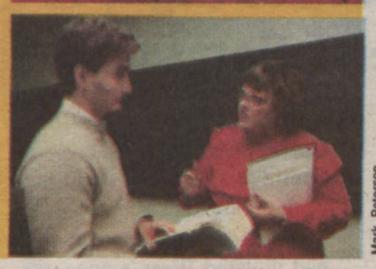
Back in the spring of 1981, they decided the East High School auditorium needed major cosmetic surgery. But getting the school board to come up with the estimated $100,000 cost of the project seemed all but hopeless.

Instead Olson, fine arts chair, and Kaufman, drama director, enlisted support. Some 1,000 of the school's alumni contributed money.

"But the real clincher was the parents," Olson says. "They took the $50,000 we raised to the school board and requested additional aid."

The board agreed to contribute some parts of the project, such as a new roof for the entire school and a complete paint job.

Meet: Carol Gaede



Mark Peterson

There Is No 'After School'

"What I really *spend my life doing is carting things around," explained Carol Gaede as she picked up the costumes, assorted script books, and a stool that would be the prop for today's rehearsal and headed toward the stage. Gaede is an associate professor in the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre Arts at Minnesota's Moorhead State University, on the North Dakota border.*

President of the MSU Faculty Association and active in the Democratic Farmer Labor party, Gaede teaches the gamut of speech and dramatics courses. But her "primary" assignment is to build an oral interpretation and readers theatre program, which involves identifying and recruiting participants, coaching students, and serving as the bus driver for Moorhead State's award-winning forensics team.

No wonder the needlepoint sign on her office bulletin board says "Wonder Woman Works Here." This faculty member, who claims to be typical, spends days, nights, evenings, and weekends teaching and being creative.

NEA Today *contributing writer Ken Megill talked with Dr. Gaede recently as she moved through her hectic daily schedule.*

What is your job?
I teach. Both in and out of the classroom, both formally and informally. I teach seven different courses during the school year, have office hours approximately 10 hours a week, coach forensics, direct a show once a year—and I often perform. I think I teach by example when I perform, for my students often observe what I do.

You've adapted your own performances and those of your students for videotape. Why?
Videotaping gives the students experience in television, where many of them get jobs. It also allows us to preserve performances for use as teaching examples, and it gives those performances a wider audience exposure through the campus cable TV hookup.

How much of your time is spent counseling students?
I don't even know how to add that up. I spend many hours each week—a lot of it is very informal. I may meet a student in the hallway and ask, "How's it going?" When the student says "lousy," we talk—sometimes for 10 minutes and sometimes for 10 hours.

A lot of my "counseling" goes on during speech trips. When we're driving cross-country late at night, often a student will open up about concerns or questions in a way that might never happen in a formal setting—not in an office and certainly not in a classroom.

What *kind* of counseling does a faculty member do?
We sometimes handle immediate crises, but more often we work on the long-range growth and development of the student. As one of the professional counselors on campus told me, the faculty is the first line of defense. We see students every day and work with them for as long as four or five years. I find this long-term relationship to be a very satisfying part of my work.

Several of your students say they came here because of the reputation of your department—and one of your colleagues calls you "a very good recruiter." Would you agree?
I will take that as a compliment, so long as it doesn't mean that I do things just to get bodies into this institution. I hate the numbers game.

But so much of what we do brings us into contact with the public. As I judge speech contests, host workshops, or attend high school productions and I see high school students who have talent and potential, I sincerely want them to come to Moorhead State.

Who hires the people with whom you work?
Legally, the administration of the university hires them, but always with the advice of the departmental search committee. In our department, the faculty is very vigorous in participating in the hiring process. Sometimes we work under the guidance of the department chair and sometimes not.

What exactly does a search committee do?
The committee goes through the applications, narrows the field, and then makes personal contact with the top candidates, sometimes over the phone. I have served on 14 search committees in eight years—sometimes in departments other than my own. We always interview the finalists in person during a two- or three-day visit to the campus. By and large our recommendations are followed.

How has collective bargaining changed the working conditions here?
When I came to Moorhead in the fall of 1975, the Inter Faculty Organization (our statewide NEA/Minnesota Education Association affiliate) had just been selected as the bargaining agent for the 2,000 faculty in Minnesota's seven state universities.

During the last eight years, we have negotiated or won through arbitration a salary schedule, an effective grievance process, and early retirement incentives that we hope will allow experienced faculty to retire gracefully and at the same time open up positions for newer faculty members.

Any breakthroughs in your last contract?
We managed to establish a professional development and evaluation system that lets faculty members set their own professional goals. It requires the dean to discuss those goals with us in person but doesn't allow him to unilaterally change them. Self-direction of one's career is a hallmark of professionals. All of us are pleased with the high degree of communication this new program has brought.

How do you spend your summers?
I spend many of them, like this past one, working on campus, teaching summer school. A couple of summers ago I worked with a community theatre in Texas. I worry that if I teach students to perform but get too far away from the actual experience of performing myself, I may forget what it's like for them.

Some people say that faculty spend too much time in research. Do you agree?
All faculty face the problem of having to advance in their field. A colleague in chemistry, for example, works night and day in the laboratory on research projects. Someone in English spends hours in the library researching the history of a particular literary movement. Many of our music faculty perform in local symphonies or choirs. *My* "research" involves creative performances.

Under your contract and the mission statement of your university, "community service" is expected of all faculty members. What do you do in that line?
I use my professional expertise in a practical setting in Moorhead, Fargo, and other nearby communities. I give talks to clubs, set up political debates, and use my professional skills in other ways.

This year you'll be going on sabbatical. What will you do?
I am going to take courses at the University of Minnesota in organizational communication, because that field has changed a lot in recent years. I also want to apply the theory to a practical situation: I'll serve as a communication consultant for the Inter Faculty Organization in St. Paul.

What do you consider your profession?
My profession is education. Teaching in a classroom, meeting the student in the hall, working in the theatre as a performer, judging speech tournaments, being active in the community—these are all a part of my job, and I love it!

What do you do "after school"?
For me (and most faculty), there is no such thing as "after school." We spend our lives actively engaged in our professions, wherever we may be.

RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

ART

Leonard Baskin's Miniature Natural History (First Series). Four tiny volumes, each 3½" square, present watercolors of marine life, insects, domestic animals, and extinct creatures

painted by one of the nation's most distinguished artists. Both English and Latin names are given for each creature, plus probable date of extinction for species no longer with us. Pantheon. Slipcased set of four volumes, $9.95. From bookstores or from Pantheon/Random House Order Dept. Call toll-free (800) 638-6460; in Maryland, (800) 492-0782; in Alaska and Hawaii, call collect (301) 876-2286.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

1983 ERIC Updates on vocational curriculums: *Marketing and Distributive Education Curriculum* (BB 61), *Agricultural Education Curriculum* (BB 62), *Health Occupations Education Curriculum* (BB 63), *Computerized Career Information Systems* (BB 64), *Postsecondary Vocational Education* (BB 65), *Adult Basic Education* (BB 66), *Lifelong Learning* (BB 67), *Vocational Education for High Technology* (BB 68), *Career Assessment Instruments* (BB 69), *Improving Vocational Education Curriculum* (BB 70). $4.95 each. Quantity discounts available. Prepay orders of $10 or less. National Center for Research in Vocational Education, National Center Publications, Box N, 1960 Kenny Rd., Columbus, OH 43210, or call toll-free (800) 848-4815 except in Ohio, Alaska, Hawaii.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Human Needs and Social Welfare Curriculum Project. L. Kay Dietl and Marsha J. Neff. A high school social studies curriculum project, with single copies of student text and teacher manual priced respectively as follows:

I. ***"To Promote the General Welfare"? An Introduction to the United States Social Welfare System.*** $4.95, $4.95.

II. ***Aging Americans: Profiles, Programs, Possibilities.*** $6.50, $5.50.

III. ***Youth: Search for Identity.*** $9.95, $7.95.

IV. ***Single Parent Families: Choice or Chance?*** $7.95; $5.50.

V. ***New Directions: Alternatives to the United States Social Welfare System.*** $4.95, $3.95. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027.

GUIDANCE

The Young People's Yellow Pages: A National Sourcebook for Youth. Alvin Rosenbaum. Gives general advice and shows how to obtain more specific answers to all sorts of problems or questions teenagers might have—such as how to write a college admissions essay, deal with an unwanted pregnancy, help a friend who is depressed, or maintain normal weight. 320 pp. Paperback, $8.95. From bookstores or (with $1.50 more for postage and handling) from GD/Perigee, Putnam Publishing Group, Sales Dept., 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Teaching Values and Ethics in College. Michael J. Collins, editor. New Directions for Teaching and Learning No. 13. Presents articles that encourage college faculty members in all disciplines to make values explicit in their teaching. Stock no. TL13. 96 pp. $7.95 prepaid. Calif., D.C., N.J., N.Y. residents add appropriate sales tax. Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 433 California St., San Francisco, CA 94104.

SEX EDUCATION

Facts About STD [Sexually Transmitted Diseases]. Sol Gordon. A presentation for teenagers in simple English on the symptoms, prognosis, and treatment of diseases—including herpes and AIDS—transmitted by sexual activity. A chapter in Spanish covers syphilis and gonorrhea only. 49 pp. $5.95. Ed-U Press, Inc., P.O. Box 583, Fayetteville, NY 13066.

CREATIVE WRITING

"Tell Mrs. Zimmerman Melvin Left": Over 125 Daily Poem Starters for Every Age for Igniting Writing. Ellen Turlington Johnston-Hale. Provides a "pot of great first lines for poems,"

such as the one in the title (uttered by a student as he tried to skip class). The author, a former English teacher, reprints sample poems and suggests sources of poem ideas. 49 pp. $2 postpaid; 5 copies or more, $1.60 each postpaid. E. T. Johnston-Hale, Gingerbread House, Rte. 7, Box 616-A, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Developing Social Responsibility in the Middle School. Phillip A. Heath and Thomas D. Weible. Provides teachers with ideas for helping students learn to make responsible personal and social decisions. Revised 1983. 62 pp. $6.95. Stock no. 1516-9-1D. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

Idea Exchange

All the Write Families

At Indian Hills Junior High School in Iowa's East Des Moines school district, writing has become a family affair. Parents pitch in to help students sharpen communications skills—and the two generations get to know each other better in the process.

The occasion is "Write Night," an evening of dinner and writing, sponsored by the local Parents Advisory Council and the Indian Hills Writing Across the Curriculum Committee.

Participants in the Write Night are the first 30 seventh- and eighth-graders to sign up, along with one or two parents or other adults who come with each student. The evening begins with a potluck dinner, followed by an exercise in pre-writing, writing, and rewriting. Participants have the chance to write about a special emotional event that took place in their family—maybe the first time they went on vacation together, the day they brought home a new family pet, or a holiday celebration they especially enjoyed.

After a discussion of possible topics and approaches, everyone drafts an essay and each parent and child share what they've written and work to combine their two essays into one. Participants then form larger groups to read the final essays aloud.

At the end of the evening, each writer gets a certificate of involvement that declares "You were just right for Write Night."

Marcia Mendenhall and Mary Curtin, the English teachers who organized the first Write Night last year, say word has spread fast. Two elementary schools in the district had Write Nights later in the year, and more schools and other districts are asking for help in getting started.

"It does more than just increase students' interest in writing for the rest of the year," Mendenhall notes. "It improves communication between students and their parents by giving the children a chance to work as part of a family team."

Firm Foundations For Elementary Science

Misconceptions cause many of the problems students have in learning about science, say Edward Smith and Charles Anderson of Michigan State University in East Lansing. Smith and Anderson work in the Elementary Science Project of the Institute for Research in Teaching.

Take common misconceptions about light, for example. We see objects because light bounces off them to our eyes. Out of more than 100 fifth graders Smith and Anderson observed, hardly any knew this before they studied a unit on light. That's understandable—but 78 percent of them still didn't know it *after* they studied the unit. Instead, they were convinced that light helps us see objects just by shining on them and "brightening" them.

Misconceptions like this are hard to get rid of because they seem to make sense. Smith and Anderson suggest that teachers ask questions that have been carefully designed to elicit students' explanation of a phenomenon. Teachers can then contrast that explanation with the scientific one and show how the misconception fails to really explain what's going on.

Smith and Anderson have developed special materials for teachers to use with two popular science programs, Laidlaw's *Exploring Science* and Rand McNally's *SCIIS*. When the materials were tested with fifth grade classes studying light, they turned the statistics around—78 percent of the students understood the concept.

More information about misconceptions appears in two articles by Janet Eaton, Charles Anderson, and Edward Smith: "When Students Don't *Know* They Don't Know" (*Science & Children*, April 1983, pp. 7-9) and "Students' Misconceptions Interfere with Learning: Case Studies of Fifth Grade Students" (*Elementary School Journal*, forthcoming).

Breakfast Table Propaganda

Today's children are consumers, too. So they need to learn how manufacturers bid for their attention in the marketplace. One way to begin, suggests Pamela Klawitter, a former fifth and sixth grade teacher in Mt. Nebo, West Virginia, is by examining breakfast cereal boxes.

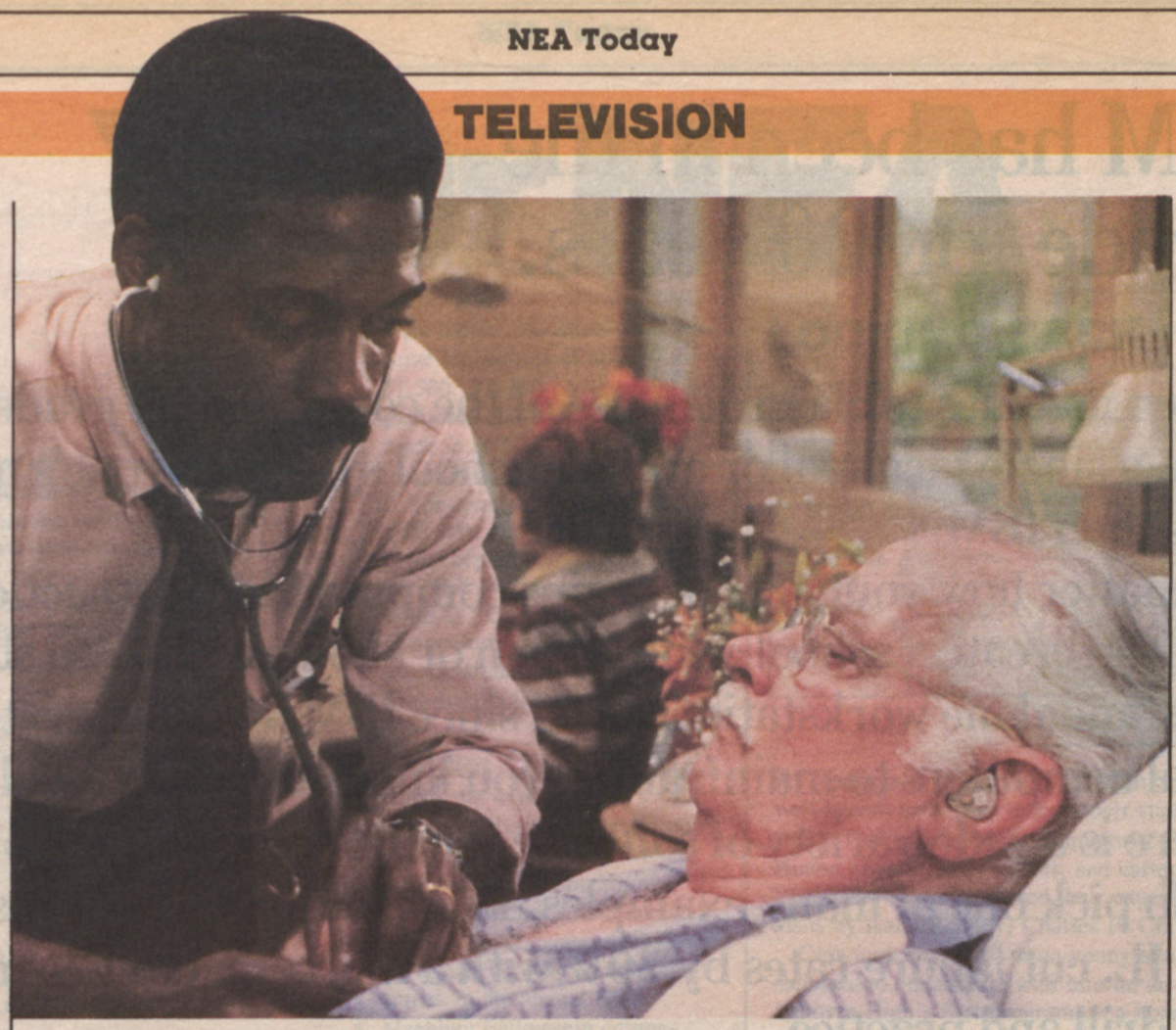
Klawitter started by having her pupils collect a variety of cereal boxes. She cut the front and back from each box and displayed them on the bulletin board. At first, students identified obvious ploys to gain their attention—bright colors, coupons, pictures of familiar cartoon characters. Then they looked for more subtle tactics—pictures of attractive people or appetizing breakfasts, for example, or words like *free* or *crunchy*.

The class talked about which boxes stood out, and why. Finally, children used the various attention-getting devices to design their own box labels.

By becoming aware of advertisers' techniques, Klawitter feels, the children began recognizing them on supermarket shelves—and took another step toward becoming educated consumers.

If you're using a new classroom activity—or a new twist on an old one—and it works wonders, why not share it with your colleagues across the country? Send a brief description (along with any photos, sketches, or charts that would help to explain it) to Idea Exchange, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

TELEVISION



'A Doctor's Story': Touching, Disturbing

Art Carney and Howard Rollins star in a TV drama that provides a powerful commentary on society's attitudes toward the elderly.

Dr. Zack Williams has a problem. He refuses to treat his elderly patients with condescension or indifference or contempt. And that refusal provokes first impatience, then outrage, among his colleagues.

This clash of attitudes is the dynamic center of the two-hour presentation "A Doctor's Story," upcoming this winter on NBC-TV. NEA, the American Association of Retired Persons, and the National Council on Aging strongly endorse the program. (Broadcast date has not been set as we go to press, but the show will probably air in December or January. We suggest you save the teaching suggestions that follow and watch your local television listings for the exact broadcast date and time.)

As the plot of "A Doctor's Story" unfolds, Dr. Williams emerges as that rarity, a man who recognizes the humanity and dignity of the aged. As his conflicts with other medical staff intensify, the hospital becomes a mirror of larger social frictions and injustices. "A Doctor's Story" is *our* story—the story of a society that often condemns the elderly to the ghetto of loneliness.

The brilliance of the drama derives from the care executive producer and writer Ronald Robin has taken to ensure that Williams' emergence as a hero is tinged with irony. In a more compassionate society, Williams would be the norm.

Students will undoubtedly be touched by this story. Art Carney masterfully portrays Harry Wickes, a 74-year-old widower misdiagnosed as senile and threatened with exile to a nursing home. Wickes bends but never breaks beneath pain that might crush a lesser person. He is—in the strongest sense—a survivor.

And so too—though in a different way—is the young resident doctor, deftly played by Howard Rollins. Dr. Williams' dedicated perseverance threatens both his professional future and his family life. But the adversity never weakens him. He remains a hero—what's more, a hero without a halo.

Peggy Johnson and Carl Luty prepared this guide. Johnson is a fifth grade teacher at Bedford (Va.) Elementary School. Luty is an NEA staff writer.

Grade level: Intermediate through high school.

Subject areas: Social studies, health, physical education, guidance, psychology, literature, home economics, family studies.

Specific objectives:

► To make students aware that our society tends to define the elderly as no more than burdens on their juniors.

► To teach students that our cultural diversity is worth cherishing and that old people contribute a distinct part of that diversity.

► To encourage students to seek solutions to the unique problems older citizens face.

► To foster in students impatience with—and dedication to eliminating—all stereotypes.

Previewing Activities:

► Engage students in a discussion that uncovers their preconceptions about the elderly. Make a list of these so that later the class may discuss how many of the preconceptions are misconceptions.

Embassy Television

► Help students try to think of problems that are unique to the elderly.

► Ask students how they treat the elderly. Are they ill at ease in the company of the aged? Are they frightened? Confused? Impatient? Condescending?

► Ask students to define *senility. Geriatrics. Condescension. Stereotype. Ageism. Heroism.*

► Divide your class into small groups and have each group do research on attitudes toward the elderly in some particular culture (e.g., Chinese, Hispanic, Arabic).

► Find out what age your students consider "old." How long do they expect to live? How long do they *want* to live? Why? You might want to hand out charts showing how the average life expectancy of Americans has changed during this century.

► Have students write a letter to an elderly person. What subjects do they expect to interest the person? What questions will they ask about their imaginary correspondent's life and activities?

Postviewing Activities:

► Ask students to reevaluate the "preconceptions list" they earlier developed. To make this assignment more lively, ask students who have grandparents or great-grandparents living in the area to invite them to join a class discussion.

► Have the class discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three generations living in the same household—how to cope as a student, parent, or grandparent in this home.

► Discuss the "new" disease of the elderly—Alzheimer's.

► Assign research projects on elderly persons who have made great contributions to our society.

► Remind students that President Reagan is a senior citizen. Political views aside, how does this fact affect their attitude toward the aged?

► Have students clip news items on the growing controversy over nursing home safety standards. Then arrange a class visit to a nursing home. Encourage students to choose an elderly pen pal.

► Ask students to discuss, then write about Dr. Zack Williams' conclusion that "Old people are the survivors; they're the strongest, the bravest. . . ."

Related Reading:

Blue, Rose. *Grandma Didn't Wave Back.* New York: Franklin Watts, 1972. (Grades 3-5).

Buck, Pearl S. *The Beech Tree.* New York: John Day, 1955. (Ages 7 to 11).

Donnelly, Elfie. *So Long Grandpa.* New York: Crown Publisher, 1981. (Grades 3-5).

Green, Phyllis. *The Fastest Quitter in Town.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1972 (Grades 1-4).

Maer, Norma Fox. *A Figure of Speech.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1973. Also available in Dell paperback. (Grade 7 and up).

Robin, Gil. *Changes.* New York: Harper and Row, 1973. (Grade 5 and up).

Stolz, Mary. *Land's End.* New York: Harper & Row, 1973. (Grade 7 and up).

Other NEA-Recommended Viewing This Month

In addition to "A Doctor's Story," NEA recommends the following broadcasts:

The Celebrity and the Arcade Kid—*ABC, Wednesday, November 9, 4:30-5:30 ET.* This ABC Afterschool Special presents a modern-day fable based on Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* about two disillusioned teenagers. When a teen idol inadvertently trades places with a look-alike video-arcade champ, their comedic misadventures provide each wth a better understanding of his own significance. (Teaching guides appear in *Scholastic, Voice, Read,* and *Learning* magazines.)

Kennedy—*NBC, Sunday, November 20, 8-11 pm ET; Monday, November 21, 9-11 pm; Tuesday, November 22, 9-11 pm EST.* Martin Sheen plays JFK, Blair Brown plays Jackie in this 7-hour miniseries dramatizing Kennedy's White House years. Local NBC affiliates will offer curriculum materials on the series and will air a special half-hour program on the Kennedy years giving schools and libraries free off-air taping rights (check local listings for time and date).

Romeo and Juliet on Ice—*CBS, Friday, November 25, 11 am-noon ET.* Part of the CBS Festival of Lively Arts, this version of the classic tale stars Olympic skater Dorothy Hamill and features children reading from Shakespeare's play.

Newton's Apple—*PBS, check local listings for times and dates.* In each 30-minute episode of this 13-week series, a visiting scientist joins host Ira Flatow and a studio audience to answer viewers' questions through elaborate demonstrations and experiments.

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REACHING OUT

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A cadre of the nation's educational research laboratories have joined forces to demonstrate that "Effective Schools Are America's Best Bet."

Through "Best Bet" clinics, the labs hope to help schools capitalize on recent research advances in two areas: effective school practices and educational technology. Researchers will review—free of charge—your district's current practices and discuss ways to improve them.

NEA affiliates in Oregon, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Ohio have already participated in the Best Bet program, and NEA strongly urges all affiliates to take advantage of this service.

Start by writing the Center for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR), 1518 K St., N.W., Washington, DC 20005. CEDaR will then contact the laboratory serving your region and work with you to arrange an on-site clinic.

Helping Teachers Renew Enthusiasm

Are you less excited about teaching than you used to be? The NEA Professional Library has a new book that may help.

Teacher Renewal: Revitalization of Classroom Teachers (32 pages) outlines specific classroom strategies for coping with the knowledge explosion, altered school values, technological developments, diverse school populations, demands for accountability—plus personal and professional stress.

It's available for $2.50 from the NEA Professional Library, Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516 (stock no. 1059-0-00-D).

When Writing to NEA...
Unless otherwise indicated, the address is NEA Center, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

NEA, Kodak Expand Grants Program

The NEA/Kodak Program, "Cameras in the Curriculum: A Challenge to Teacher Creativity," has been extended a second year and expanded to include grants to Association members in higher education.

Administered by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, the program is designed to help teachers develop and then share projects that use photography to strengthen the curriculum.

Grants of $200 each for the best proposals will be awarded to 130 K-12 teachers—including at least one in each state—and 20 higher education faculty.

The seven best of these proposals—six from K-12 and one from higher education—will receive top awards of up to $1,500. All 150 projects will be published and widely disseminated in an NEA/Kodak curriculum volume.

For competition rules, see your state Association periodical or the September 26 issue of the NEA NOW newsletter—or write to "Cameras in the Curriculum," NFIE, NEA Center. Deadline for submission of proposals is December 9, 1983.

Golden Opportunity

Now's the time and now's your chance—to help your profession, your colleagues, your students, your self. So try stirring up some intellectual adrenaline and letting your creative juices flow.

NEA is once again accepting entries in the annual Hilda Maehling Fellowship competition. The awards—up to $2,500 each—go to members for projects that advance Association work, improve classroom instruction, or enhance the prestige of teaching.

For application forms, write the Hilda Maehling Fellowship Program at NEA Center. Deadline is December 1.

Attention, NEA Life Members

The *1983 Proceedings of the Representative Assembly* will be mailed in January to any NEA life member who wants a copy. To get one, simply clip your mailing label from the front of this newspaper and send it with your request to Membership Records at NEA Center no later than December 1.

LOOKING BACK

► **Teachers at Palmyra (Pa.) High School continue to bring in** well-known authors to inspire their students (*NEA Today*, November 1982). This past school year humorist Erma Bombeck, author S.E. Hinton (*The Outsiders*, *Tex*), and cartoonist Tom Batiuk (of "Funky Winkerbean" fame) shared their expertise. On tap for 1983-84 are visits by Andy Rooney, Charles P. Crawford, and Julie Harris.

Crawford, author of three young adult novels, will invite the audience to collaborate with him on an outline for a new book. In Palmyra High's first program on a noncontemporary author, Harris will star in a one-character play about the life of Charlotte Bronte.

► **Ruth Sawdo's former fourth graders at Denver's McElwain** Elementary School (*NEA Today*, March 1983) have finally seen their efforts bear fruit. The students campaigned for more than two years to have their beloved stegosaurus dinosaur declared the official state fossil.

When Colorado Governor Richard Lamm proclaimed "Steggy" the state fossil in April 1982, the students were overjoyed, but continued lobbying the state legislature to support the governor's proclamation. They believed legislative approval was necessary before "Steggy" could appear on official state maps.

They were wrong. Governor Lamm's proclamation turned out to be sufficient. Maps issued by the state are now adorned with drawings of "Steggy."

► **Undaunted by his sudden status as something of a national** hero who's much in demand on various education commissions, East Los Angeles math teacher Jaime Escalante (*NEA Today*, June 1983) continues happily teaching calculus to his Garfield High students, many of whom are recent Mexican immigrants.

More of his students than ever—a total of 33—took the Educational Testing Service's grueling Advanced Placement (AP) calculus test last spring, and 30 of them passed it.

TAKING A STAND

Representative Assembly Charts NEA's Course

Debating educational reform took up a lot of time and energy at the 1983 NEA annual meeting, but the 7,000 delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) took a stand on lots of other issues, too.

To help curb the excessive number of **missing children,** NEA—as directed by the RA—will work with appropriate agencies such as Child Find, Inc., in New Paltz, N.Y. In addition, the RA urged NEA affiliates to support the National Clearinghouse for Missing Children.

The RA approved a position statement that reaffirms NEA's commitment to **seniority and affirmative action.** The statement stresses NEA's belief that employers should consider both concepts when making employment decisions.

Delegates also noted the importance of developing **health care cost containment** programs. The RA asked the Board of Directors to examine what the Association could do to help create a program that would slow the rate of increase in health care costs, maintain quality medical care, and assure that both public and private sectors pay their fair share.

Delegates called for an investigation of hazardous **asbestos** materials in public schools and the development of a plan to eliminate them.

The plan—to be presented to the NEA Board of Directors at its February 1984 meeting—will address the establishment of a cooperative trust fund, financed by asbestos-producing companies, to cover medical expenses of asbestos victims. The plan will also include a public relations effort to alert school employees and other citizens to the dangers of asbestos.

In other actions the RA—

►Withdrew its ban on holding NEA annual meetings in states that failed to ratify the **Equal Rights Amendment** (ERA). The Assembly called for reimposition of the boycott, however, (once the ERA is adopted by Congress) in states where the legislature defeats ERA or where NEA affiliates fail to work for ratification.

►Opposed the inclusion of nuclear attack as a "survivable disaster" in a **disaster-preparedness curriculum** produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

►Directed the Association to assess the standards and policies (now being revised) with which the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) evaluates **teacher preparation institutions.**

►Requested that NEA gather and publicize curriculum materials that address the needs of **Asian and Pacific Islander** students.

—Marian Clayton

Carolyn Salisbury

Delegates stand up to be counted on a close vote at the 1983 NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia. This 7,000-member body meets each summer to set the policies that will guide the Association in the year ahead.

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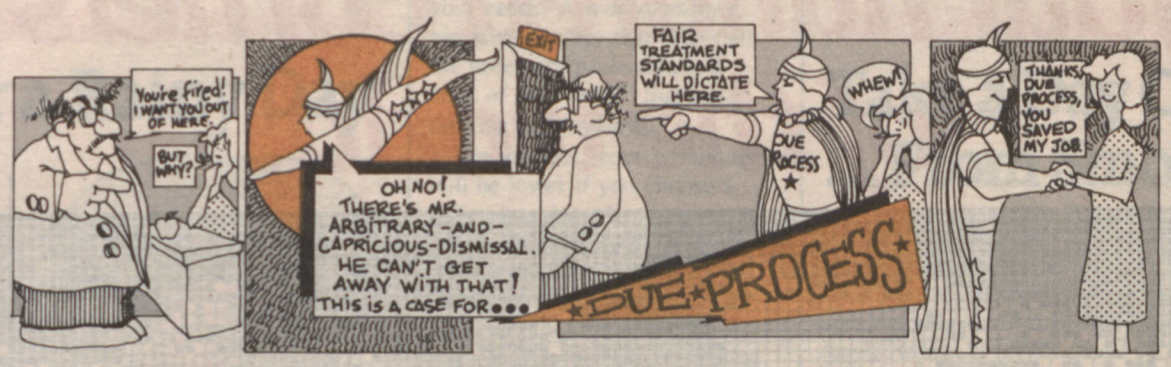
Due Process: The Clause That Protects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DUE PROCESS
WHEW!
THANKS, DUE PROCESS, YOU SAVED MY JOB.
DUE PROCESS

Due Process. A concept much discussed—and much misunderstood. But for a school or college employee who's been unfairly dismissed or otherwise disciplined, due process can be a job-saver!

If a school board, for instance, dismisses a teacher without following due process, that teacher can—through vigilant Association action—be reinstated and awarded back pay.

The right to due process stems from the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The courts have interpreted this amendment to mean that no state shall deprive a person of life, liberty, or property for arbitrary or capricious reasons. A state, the courts have ruled, cannot deprive teachers and other education staffers of their "property"—their jobs—without due process if the employees have a legitimate claim of entitlement to their jobs.

The guarantee of due process means that, before being deprived of a job, a teacher or other education employee should, at the very least, receive adequate notice of the impending action and an opportunity to be heard. Ideally, the employee should have the right to confront adverse witnesses, as well as a hearing before an impartial decision maker.

In many states, these basic due process rights are spelled out in teacher tenure or due process laws. Most of these laws allow a school board to terminate a teacher for "just cause."

What is just cause? There is no one simple answer. Most state laws do not define the term. The definition is negotiated into collective bargaining agreements or defined in school board policy.

Over the years, decision-making bodies have developed their own interpretations of just cause. Generally, a school board's disciplinary action will be upheld if the school board has—

►Reasonably related the reason for the disciplinary action to the orderly, efficient, and safe operation of the school.

►Reasonably related the disciplinary action to the seriousness of the employee's offense and the employee's record of service.

►Forewarned the employee of the possible disciplinary consequences of his or her conduct.

►Applied rules of conduct evenhandedly and nondiscriminatorily to all employees.

►Followed all procedural steps.

►Fairly and objectively investigated the offense.

Unfortunately, not all teachers and other school employees can be assured that their right to due process will be respected when their jobs are threatened. Not every state has a law that requires school boards to follow due process before taking disciplinary action—or the law may be full of loopholes.

Education employees in states without such a law have two options. They can appeal an arbitrary school board disciplinary action—and wait years for the case to wind its way through the federal court system. Or they can, as NEA recommends, work to get "fair treatment standards" included in their local Association contracts or board policy.

Contractual fair treatment standards provide many of the same protections as due process laws. And these standards can also be designed to make sure that teachers are treated fairly in the evaluation process.

Well drafted fair treatment standards can obligate a school board to let employees know exactly what's expected of them—and by what yardstick their job performance will be measured. Under fair treatment standards, employees will also know when their evaluation is taking place.

If a school board does take disciplinary action against a school employee, fair treatment standards can dictate the procedures the board must follow. The standards will spell out, for instance, the employee's right to advance notice of the impending action and to information about it. Effective fair treatment standards will also give the employee a chance to correct any performance deficiencies—as well as representation at a fair hearing called to consider any board charges.

NEA has developed a new due process training manual to help Association members and staff understand just how fair treatment and due process can be applied to protect school workers' employment rights. The manual is the heart of a due process training workshop that will be field-tested in several states starting later this month.

This unique training program provides in-depth, step-by-step training in three areas that are critical to protecting the procedural due process rights of Association members. Through the program, Association representatives will learn what it takes to—

►Interview the affected teacher, potential witnesses, and others with information about a case.

►Investigate the complaint to determine the issues and identify, obtain, and analyze evidence.

►Prepare for and represent the accused teacher at the hearing stage of the disciplinary process.

The part of the manual that focuses on fair treatment standards can help teachers raise and answer questions on how to make evaluations more fair and more effective. These questions figure to be even more important in the months ahead as more and more school districts are swept up in the "merit pay" fervor.

To get more information about your state's due process procedures—and to find out whether NEA's due process training is scheduled soon in your area—contact your state Association.

—Sheilah Vance

BOOK BEAT

Like Everything Else, Learning To Read Goes Through Stages, Too

STAGES OF READING DEVELOPMENT
By Jeanne S. Chall.
(McGraw-Hill. 283 pp. $18.95.)

In her newest book, *Stages of Reading Development*, Harvard reading expert Jeanne Chall suggests that people learn to read by moving through as many as six stages of reading capability. Entry into each depends on mastery of the skills of the preceding stage. All readers work through the sequence in the same order, but some go faster and further than others.

Educators familiar with Chall's past publications (notably her 1967 *Learning To Read: The Great Debate*, updated this year) will recognize that this new book builds on her earlier ideas about the developmental nature of the reading process. Both reading and content teachers will find useful its descriptions of what reading is likely to mean for children at various ages and what activities can help move students along to the next stage.

As Chall points out, however, compared to their predecessors in the last century, today's teachers and parents are much less certain about how to define normal progress for individual children. The one-room schoolhouse allowed a teacher to follow a child's progress over time, and large families allowed parents to compare a child with several siblings. Today both teachers and parents rely heavily on standardized tests or "scientific" norms.

In fact, Chall thinks that elementary students today may do too much of their reading by examination—or with test-like materials designed to prepare them for examinations. A steady diet of worksheets and multiple choice questions may produce boredom, which students then associate with the reading process itself. It may also provide little practice in identifying relationships and developing logic.

Reading by examination, however, is a response to public demands for teacher accountability. How else can schools measure performance in the way that the public has been conditioned to expect?

More important, though, is the interpretation put on such measurements. According to reading tests, 40 years ago average American adults read at the eighth grade level, while today they read at the twelfth. But anyone who knows—as high school teachers do—what it means to read at today's twelfth grade level may be skeptical. What has changed may be not the public's reading ability but the standards against which it is judged.

Those who question the reality of the decline in what average people can read might try their students out on one of Chall's fascinating reprints of pages from 19th century primers. We predict that today's students will flounder in these materials that third and fourth grade children once read comfortably.

The chapter on "Historical and Cultural Influences" offers a clue as to why. In teaching reading, American schools of the last century capitalized on the popular practice of repeating verses and homilies at home and in church. What children read in school then was similar in content to material that adults found important. As a result, children placed significant value on reading. Today no such common core of valued culture exists for all Americans.

Teachers will wish Chall had given more specific suggestions about techniques and materials best suited for readers at each stage, especially the crucial third stage, when children learn how to assimilate new information from textbooks. This begins for most children in the fourth grade.

Also, very specific suggestions about what can be done for readers at the extremes—precocious readers and poor readers—would have been of tremendous value.

There can be no quarrel, though, with Chall's stress on prevention of reading deficiencies. Prevention, undertaken early, is less expensive—in terms of both dollars and self-respect—than remediation at any stage of reading development. Cooperation by parents and teachers can give schools strong leadership and high expectations for children. Without both of these, we undermine our own efforts.

Reviewed by D. Joy Mott, reading teacher, and Joyce S. Rocks, English teacher, Langley High School, McLean, Virginia.

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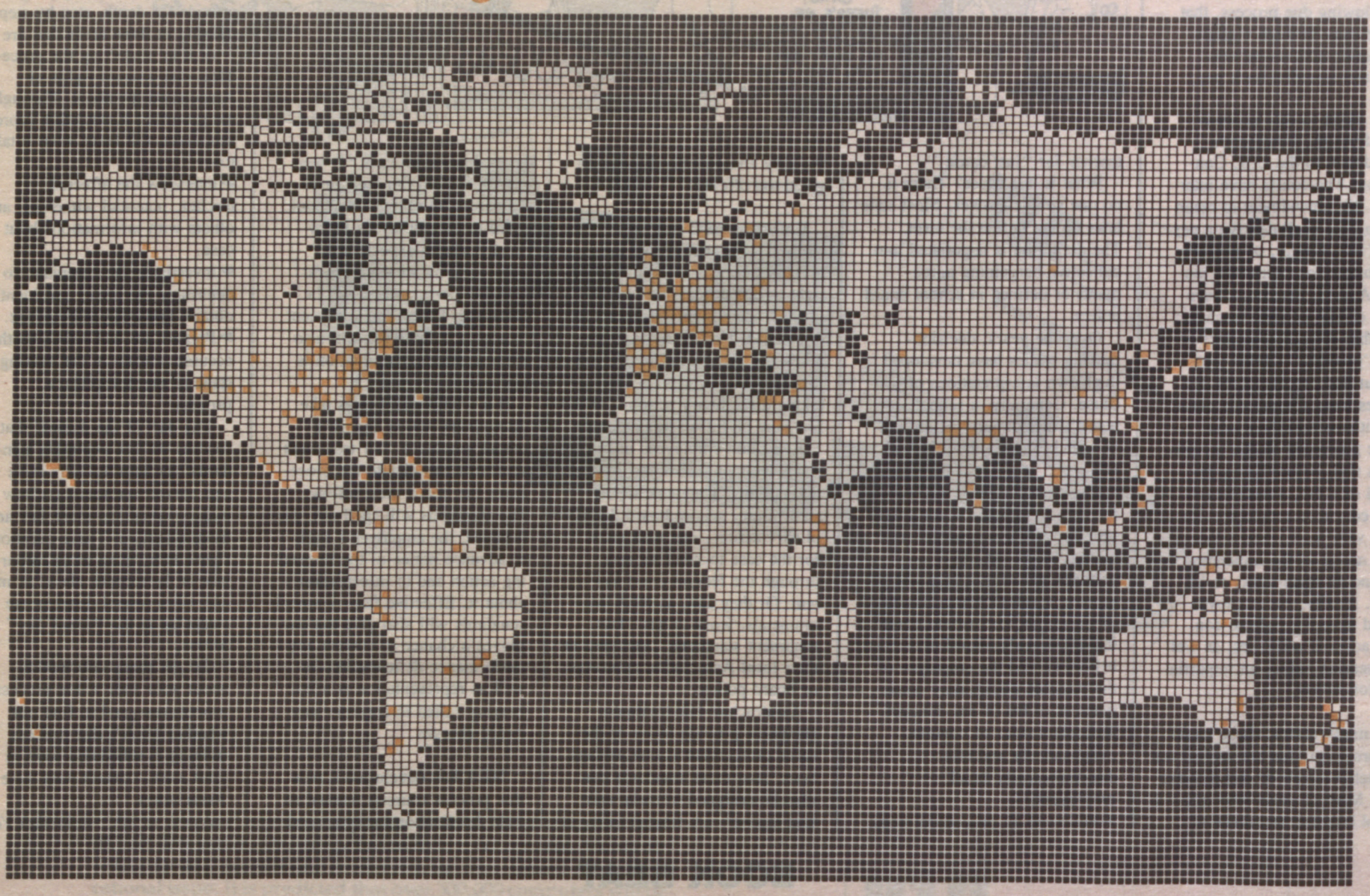

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17

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

MONEY

Insuring for a Rainy Day

More than half of all workers now between the ages of 35 and 65 will be disabled for at least three months during their working lives. About 10 percent will be unable to work for five years or longer. Some, especially the older ones, will never go back to work.

Advances in medical science are allowing people to survive what used to be fatal illnesses and injuries—but often only after long periods of convalescence. Few people have enough savings for this kind of disability, and they can't count on much outside help.

Consider, for example, a single woman in her late 40s. If she becomes unable to work, she can't collect Social Security retirement benefits until she's 62 (60 if she's a widow). She *can* get Social Security disability benefits before then—but only if she's totally disabled, unable to work anywhere doing anything.

So unless she has disability insurance—either provided by her employer or purchased on her own—she'll have to live off her savings for more than 10 years, supplementing those savings with whatever jobs she's still physically able to perform.

"For singles and even some working couples, there's more need today for disability insurance than for life insurance," says the head of Leonard B. Stern & Company, an insurance consulting firm in New York. Yet a recent survey of NEA members showed that over one

third had no form of disability insurance, while only 5 percent had no life insurance!

One reason is that, at first glance, disability insurance seems overpriced. But it doesn't have to be. You can cut the price significantly by carefully selecting a policy that meets your needs. A wise consumer can pick a policy that offers all the necessary protection and none of the "frills" that raise the cost unnecessarily.

For instance, your premiums will be lower if you choose a policy that doesn't start paying benefits until three or even six months after a disability starts. The longer the waiting period, the lower the premiums. Picking a waiting period that realistically matches your savings and other sources of disability income (sick leave, for instance) will make the policy a lot more affordable.

Another way to reduce your premiums is to lower the monthly income you choose to receive. This isn't as hard as it sounds. For one thing, disability insurance benefits are tax exempt. Then, too, you won't have the commuting, clothing, and other expenses of a working person.

Finally, shop around. Disability policies are probably the hardest kind to compare, and it pays to give close attention to details. Something as simple as how the policy defines "disability" can have a big impact on the protection the plan offers.

Your Association has published a consumer guide to disability insurance. Copies are free from NEA Special Services Response Center, 51 Monroe St., Suite 200, Rockville, MD 20850. And if you're shopping for disability insurance, check with your state Association's Special Services office. Many NEA state affiliates sponsor such programs—economically priced and tailored to fit members' needs.

—NEA Special Services

HEALTH

Take a Day Off ...From Smoking

Everybody knows—or should know by now—that smoking is dangerous. It damages the heart and lungs and, maybe worse, it makes the body vulnerable to a host of other toxic substances. A smoker who's exposed to asbestos, for example, is about 25 times as likely to get asbestosis as a nonsmoker, and smoking has the same effect on other problems from benzine exposure to the common cold.

Many doctors say cigarette smoking is this country's number one preventable risk to health. So if you're still smoking, what's your excuse?

► *Cigarettes help you relax?* Sorry, studies show that a nonsmoker is just as relaxed as a smoker with a cigarette. It's only the smoker *without* a cigarette, going through nicotine withdrawal, who's jittery.

► *You smoke "low tar" cigarettes, so you're not really taking much of a chance?* If you're like most "low tar" smokers, you just smoke more and inhale more deeply than other smokers—it's not a certain number of cigarettes, but a certain amount of nicotine that you crave. In the end, smokers of "low tar" cigarettes take in about as much harmful material as those who smoke regular brands.

► *You can quit any time you really want to?* Go ahead and try. Smoking is a serious addiction, not a habit, and it takes a lot of will-power to quit.

On Thursday, November 17, you'll have a good chance to test your resolve by giving up smoking for 24 hours during the American Cancer Society's seventh annual "Great American Smokeout."

Want to try it? These ideas may help:

► Throw away all your cigarettes and hide the ashtrays and matches.

► Stock up on sugarless gum, carrot sticks, and other nonfattening munchies.

► Drink lots of liquids—*except* beverages you associate with smoking. (Coffee and alcohol are probably two of them.)

► Tell everyone that you're quitting for the day.

► When the urge to smoke hits, take a deep breath, hold it for 10 seconds, and release it slowly.

► Work off your tension with exercise.

► Try the buddy system: ask a friend to quit with you.

A word to nonsmokers, if any of you are still with us: The American Cancer Society suggests you adopt a smoker for the day and promise to help that person get through the 24 hours without a cigarette. But remember, nagging won't do it: think of positive, creative approaches. After all, how often do you get the chance to save a friend's life?

—NEA Special Services

LEISURE

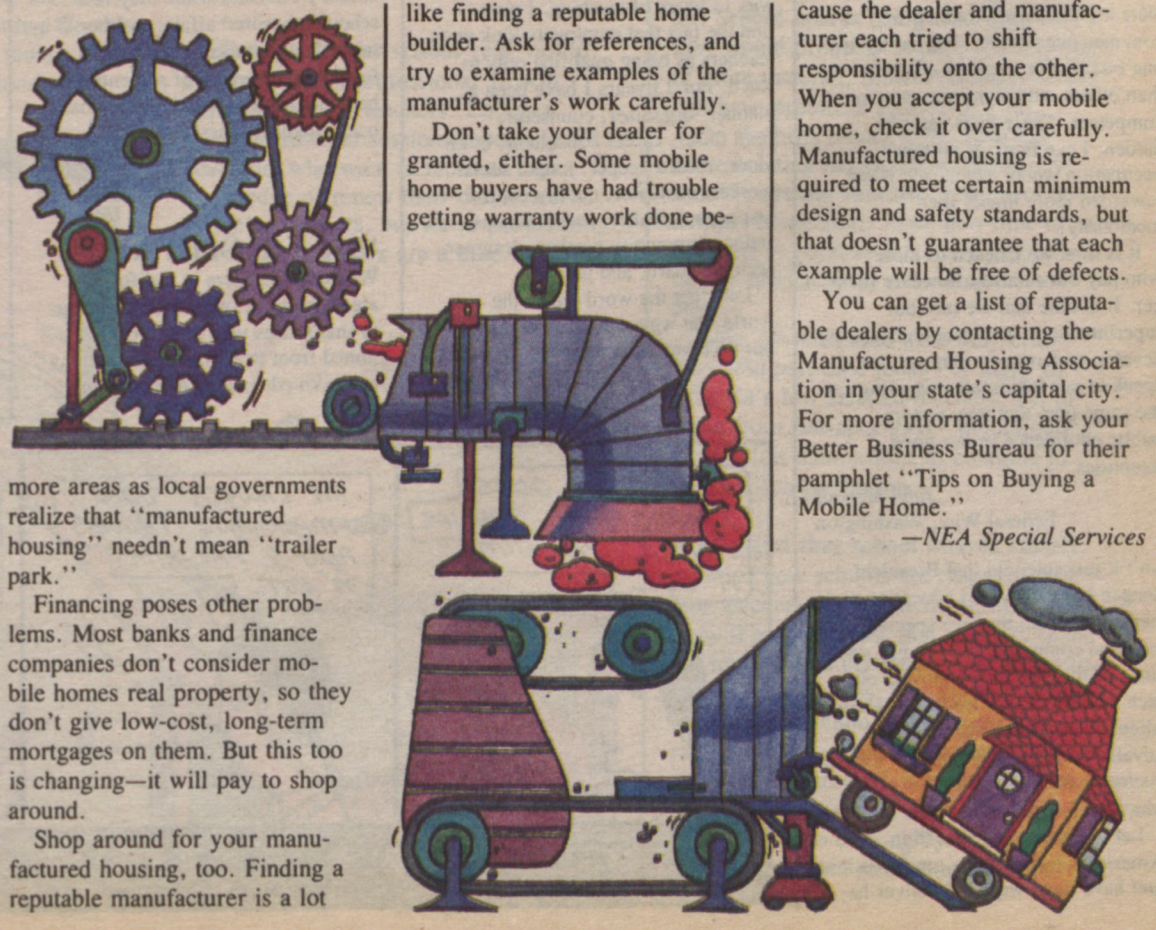
'Manufactured Homes' Can Offer Good Value

"A place in the country" has long been a cherished American dream. Many of us own a piece of land where we plan to build a little vacation home or retirement place someday. But today, housing and mortgage costs are putting even first homes out of reach.

One solution that's appealing to more and more would-be country homeowners is to buy "manufactured housing" (the latest euphemism for a "mobile home," itself once the euphemism for "trailer"). In fact, manufactured housing has become a multi-billion-dollar industry that now accounts for more than a third of the nation's new home sales.

Manufactured housing can offer working fireplaces, cathedral ceilings, sunken bathtubs, garages, patios, even Jacuzzis and solar greenhouses. Some of the new mobile homes are virtually indistinguishable from conventional frame houses, except that they cost less and can be built in a fraction of the time. On the average, manufactured housing can cost about half as much per square foot as a similar conventional house.

But before you buy a mobile home, think over some of the special difficulties it can present—zoning requirements, for example. In most parts of the country, zoning codes restrict the placement of manufactured housing. But these restrictions are being removed in more and more areas as local governments realize that "manufactured housing" needn't mean "trailer park."



Financing poses other problems. Most banks and finance companies don't consider mobile homes real property, so they don't give low-cost, long-term mortgages on them. But this too is changing—it will pay to shop around.

Shop around for your manufactured housing, too. Finding a reputable manufacturer is a lot like finding a reputable home builder. Ask for references, and try to examine examples of the manufacturer's work carefully.

Don't take your dealer for granted, either. Some mobile home buyers have had trouble getting warranty work done because the dealer and manufacturer each tried to shift responsibility onto the other. When you accept your mobile home, check it over carefully. Manufactured housing is required to meet certain minimum design and safety standards, but that doesn't guarantee that each example will be free of defects.

You can get a list of reputable dealers by contacting the Manufactured Housing Association in your state's capital city. For more information, ask your Better Business Bureau for their pamphlet "Tips on Buying a Mobile Home."

—NEA Special Services

Letters

Merit Pay: Who Needs It?

Hooray for NEA and the 7,000 delegates who refused to back down on merit pay! I can really appreciate President Futrell's stand.

My concern is that NEA needs to push harder for parental support and responsibility. The majority of our kids come to school emotionally upset because of serious home problems. I help these kids all I can, as we all do, but I refuse to take the blame for their failure to learn.

Hopefully, this latest challenge and criticism of education will unite us again in a strong effort. Stay on track. There's lots to do.

Wilma Franz
Aiken, South Carolina

Is everyone out of step but us?

President Reagan, a shrewd political operator, is hitting merit pay and competency testing for teachers very hard. The polls tell him the public is concerned. Even Walter Mondale has been quoted as endorsing these reforms. Al Shanker's outfit may not make points with teachers when it advocates such heresies, but it shows itself to the general public as more responsible than NEA.

That leaves us where we've been forever, mouthing the same boilerplate arguments with which we convince one another, but hardly anyone else. Some teachers *are* better than others, and some are even incompetent. These facts can't be hidden. I can think of no other occupation where excellence is not rewarded more highly than mediocrity.

It is time we listened to those who pay our salaries, however meager. It is time that we (not our superintendents and state legislatures) develop systems of merit pay that speak to our legitimate misgivings at the same time that they restore public confidence in our good intentions.

John Metcalf
Federal Way, Washington

Isn't it just splendid that President Reagan has discovered education and merit pay? With his own special selection committee and the full assistance of the FBI, he winnowed out such "meritorious" leaders as Haig, Allen, Watt, Donovan, Burford, Lavelle, Casey, Adelman, etc. Can he assure us such winners in education?

Let us have every church in America select its three top Christians and have them wear little silver halos as evidence of their special virtue. Each block in every town should nominate its Meritorious Mom and have her lecture to her neighbors.

Most assuredly, Ron did not "borrow" this stunning idea from any Democratic briefing book.

Jack W. Hillis
Santa Cruz, California

'School Age': How Early?

Yes, the mandatory age for starting school has outlived its usefulness (*"Debate," Oct. 1983*). Children mature according to their own biological timetables that cannot be hastened no matter how hard parents, teachers, or legislators wish to force this process.

Young children can easily memorize facts and repeat them. But the children who are developmentally ready for school have the ability to use these facts, comprehend them, integrate them into everyday life, and develop them for further inquiry. These are the children who usually like school and want to be there daily—not those who cry when they have to go to school and are habitually absent and ill from emotional stress.

Allowing children who are not ready for early school experiences a later start may actually help them excel academically once they are in school. We need good, positive, successful experiences for our children. We need to start them when *they* are ready, not when we decide they are ready.

Cynthia A. Williams
Walkerton, Indiana

We Do More Than Teach

Recently I found myself looking for a job outside the teaching profession. With a degree in mathematics, I felt sure I would be able to find employment in industry without much trouble.

But I had trouble because the only employment experience I had was 13 years of teaching. I question the fact that employers look upon teachers as being qualified only to teach. For 13 years I have been a planner, organizer, counselor, fund raiser, career consultant, motivator, record keeper, judge, social worker, evaluator, quality control inspector, speaker, tester, ambassador, community worker, designer, security guard, and janitor.

Let's get the word out to the world that we are not just teachers, but deserve credit for much more.

Paula Ward
Springtown, Texas

An Invitation

Those who say teachers are doing a poor job should try to do for a day what teachers do day after day: enter a school, close the door, and be alone with 30 elementary or 150 secondary school youngsters.

Let them try teaching these children with out-of-date books in run-down buildings and, if the need arises, with just three minutes to run to the bathroom and back down the hall to the classroom.

Let them take home 150 compositions and spend only five minutes on each (breakneck speed) and come to the realization that they have read and corrected only 12 in an hour, with 138 still to go. Then maybe their criticism would be a little more credible.

Allen Berger
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Legal Absences Rob Precious Time

Recent reports in the media state that, because of Japan's longer school day, six-day school week, and 11-month school year, Japanese high school graduates receive the equivalent of three additional years of education over their American counterparts—that, in fact, American schools offer the shortest schedules of any industrialized nation in the world.

Comparing the number of American and foreign students actually in class would uncover an even wider gap. I've had students who were absent more than they were present during a 30-day reporting period, yet their report cards showed perfect attendance. Their names appeared week after week on the lists that land in faculty boxes, all beginning, "Please do not count the following students absent on...."

While it may not be fair to penalize students by counting them absent from class while they're at school-sponsored affairs, neither is it fair to hold teachers accountable for the achievement of students who have not been exposed to what has been taught in class!

Marion Wagamon
Huntsville, Texas

'Are You Out There?'

We health teachers in California are looking for other health teachers to share ideas with and to open a united front to promote the teaching of health education. Are you out there?

Give us a collect call at 213/582-4550 by December 1 if you're interested in working together to promote the cause of healthy children in America.

Richard Loya
California Association of School Health Educators
Huntington Park, California

'You Teach? Horrors!'

I am often greeted with a look of horror when people learn that I am a school teacher. What was once an occupation of respect, and in some places even prestige, has now toppled to the bottom of the heap. We classroom teachers are put down, ridiculed, and ostracized because of our chosen profession.

Articles questioning our ability, competence, and dedication are widespread. The public has come to perceive the teaching field as a grazing land for mediocre, lazy, ineffective, not-so-smart non-professionals.

It's no wonder the cream of the nation's collegiate crop are bypassing careers in education. The low pay, monotony, limited fringe benefits, student assaults, and limited opportunity for promotion are heralded by the media. The joy of helping someone else discover new worlds is seldom mentioned.

After hearing so many negative comments concerning my profession, I sometimes wonder if I have a "right" to enjoy my job. But I do enjoy it. While teaching is neither the newest profession nor the best paid, many of us still find it a fulfilling career.

Pat Bailey
Las Vegas, Nevada

Can a Computer Make Bulletin Boards?

What's the big deal about computers anyway? So what if they can teach a kid all about nuclear physics one period and French grammar the next? Can they break up fights at the pencil sharpener? Can a computer take bathroom duty?

So what if it can average 150 grades in three minutes? What's it going to do when little Johnny sticks bubble gum on its CRT? Or when little Mary refuses to turn it on for her physics lesson?

I'm not against computers, but anyone who thinks they can replace teachers hasn't spent any time in a classroom watching what teachers really do all day.

What is the computer going to do with fire drills, or tardy students, or students who don't do their homework, or students who get a little nervous taking tests, or students who just feel like talking about what's going on in their lives? Can a computer convince an adolescent that there is life after pimples?

Just what is it that we expect of teachers, and can an electronic machine do it better? Who is everyone going to blame if Johnny still doesn't learn how to read?

Better keep those teachers around for a while until we figure that one out.

Linda A. Prentice
New Iberia, Louisiana

Wrong Direction?

We are a nation founded upon ideals of excellence and the good life; we would not have it otherwise. When our schools are compared with those of other industrialized nations, however, and come up wanting, we must examine our direction and goals.

Are we moving in the wrong direction when we spend ever-increasing amounts of money for our handicapped in order that they may be able to enjoy the best quality of life possible? When we try to be supportive and therapeutic to our children with emotional problems so severe that they may never be really productive citizens?

Are we trying to be too many things to too many people? In our democratic zeal to provide everyone with equal opportunity, are we indeed lowering the excellence of our educational process until we *are* placing our nation at risk?

As a school counselor, I refuse to believe that today's students are not as bright or as knowledgeable as their predecessors. I am amazed, frankly, that as many students do as well as they do in light of the complexity of tasks we are trying to carry out.

Elizabeth S. Sullivan
Salt Lake City, Utah

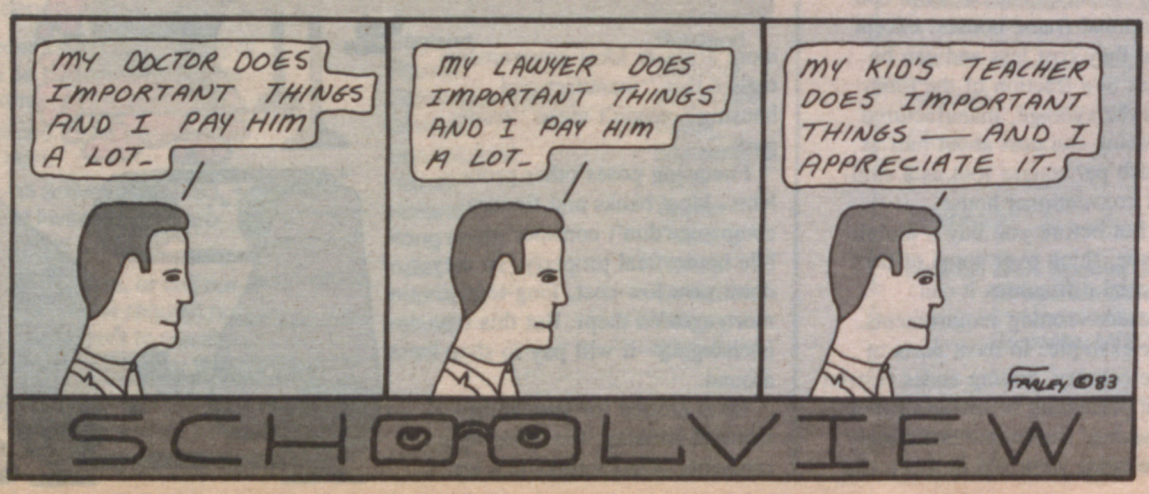
Figures Questioned

While studying to be a mathematics teacher over 20 years ago I remember seeing a bulletin board which asked, "Do figures lie, or do liars figure?"

That recollection came after seeing NEA publications lambasting President Reagan and his administration for, among other things, having the largest budget deficits in history.

My "figures" show that teachers now have the highest salaries in history. Could that also be attributed to the President? Or do we only use figures when they show him in a bad light?

George A. Calder
Westland, Michigan


MY DOCTOR DOES IMPORTANT THINGS AND I PAY HIM A LOT-
MY LAWYER DOES IMPORTANT THINGS AND I PAY HIM A LOT-
MY KID'S TEACHER DOES IMPORTANT THINGS — AND I APPRECIATE IT.
FRAZEY ©83
SCHOOLVIEW

What's *your* opinion? NEA members are cordially invited to use this page to exchange ideas with their colleagues around the nation. We reserve the right to edit letters for length. Address correspondence to "Letters," *NEA Today*, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Debate

Is it time to lengthen the school year or the school day?

Ira Strickstein

YES

Diane Russell teaches first grade at Lucian L. Lockhart Elementary School in Houston, Texas. Now in her third year of teaching, she also serves on the Houston Teachers Association communications committee.

Public education currently is facing critical review from many quarters, with national, state, and locally appointed task forces all suggesting ways to stem the "rising tide of mediocrity." Raising student achievement levels and test scores are of particular concern.

Extending the school day, or year, or both would improve the quality of education by giving teachers more time to present material—and students more time to learn it.

For example, if under the present calendar children receive 30 minutes of reading instruction a day for 180 days, total reading instruction time for the year is 90 hours. Extending the school year to 210 days would increase that instruction to 105 hours and give students the advantage of more learning time.

Slower students who often need extra time to grasp certain concepts would especially benefit. In some cases the longer day or year might make the difference between promotion and retention. And some slower children might be saved the frustration that inhibits their learning and causes them to lose interest in school and drop out.

Having more classroom hours each year could also eliminate much teacher frustration. How many times have you wanted and needed more time to teach certain skills—but felt forced to move on because of time limits? An extended day or year would allow this time.

Students would have more time to study subjects that interest them but that they can't now fit into their program. Subjects like music, art, and drama that would enrich their lives. Subjects like computer programming or typewriting that would help them in a practical way. Or subjects like photography or auto repair that would give them personal enjoyment.

Socialization, a "fringe benefit" of school attendance, is also a significant part of any child's education. For many youngsters, school is the only place they can be with children their own age in a supervised setting. When these youngsters don't attend school in the summer, their social skills suffer.

With an extended year, working parents wouldn't have the problem of what to do with their children during the summer months. They could rest assured that their children were not only being well cared for but learning as well.

The present classroom calendar doesn't prepare students for the realities of the working world. They become accustomed to working for 10 months and then vacationing for two. Yet most jobs grant only two to four weeks' vacation a year.

Extending the school year would probably decrease student academic regression, a frequent occurrence after the long summer vacation. Each fall we teachers have to spend a lot of time reviewing skills that students learned the previous year. The result is less time to teach new material.

Last but not least, making fuller use of school buildings would deter crime. When school plants are vacant, they frequently attract vandals. Extending the calendar would almost certainly reduce the need to repair damaged classrooms and replace stolen property.

Joe Di Dio

NO

Lauren Sarver teaches biology to both advanced and learning disabled students at Stonewall Jackson High School in Manassas, Virginia. She is the current vice-president and a past president of the Prince William Education Association.

Teaching in Virginia, where the school year runs 180 or more days and the school day averages seven hours, I see no reason for any extension of either.

Lengthening the school year would mean greatly increased operating costs for school districts that cannot now pay educators salaries even close to those of comparable professionals. From light bulbs to chalk, paper to duplicating fluid, fuel bills to water bills—school budgets would soar. Districts would have to spend more money on maintenance and gas for school buses; salaries for custodians, cafeteria workers, clerical help, and teachers; and insurance programs and benefits for employees.

Also, when considering an extended school year, districts would have to look at the physical limitations of school buildings. Many aren't designed or equipped to function in extreme summer heat. Remodeling costs would be beyond the budgets of most districts.

Having a longer school year would adversely affect professional growth opportunities for teachers. Colleges schedule summer sessions especially for educators who want to increase their knowledge or renew their certificates.

We're teachers, but we're people too, and for us summers are a time for renewal of energy and pursuit of personal interests. One or two breaks during the year wouldn't be time enough for many of us to adequately renew ourselves to continue teaching.

Those who call for lengthening the school day, if not the school year, usually aren't teachers. They don't work in classrooms with elementary students and aren't aware of youngsters' limited attention spans. Children develop many skills during their early years—skills that are necessarily taught at home rather than at school.

Before extending the school day, educators should determine whether inclusion of art, music, computer studies, and other such nonbasic programs will be at the expense of basics. Innovative curriculum development and implementation are essential, but the schedule needs to be reasonably balanced.

Moreover, even with a longer school year, students would probably have no more time to learn current subject matter. School boards being what they are, they would probably require the teaching of more material. Slower students would still have problems absorbing it all.

On the high school level, districts contemplating moving to a longer day should consider students' nonschool activities. Many teens work part-time or are involved in pursuits that merit review before automatically extending school days.

Also, students aren't the only ones who hold part-time jobs. For many of Virginia's low-salaried teachers, the income from late-afternoon "moonlighting" is what lets them afford to continue in their chosen profession.

I suggest that school boards closely examine how schools are managed and how teachers use instructional time. They'll probably find that teachers spend too much of the classroom day on noninstructional activities. The solution is *not* to extend the school day or year, but rather to redirect noninstructional tasks to aides or clerical staff, schedule student activities after school, train prospective educators more thoroughly in classroom management, and strengthen students' study skills.

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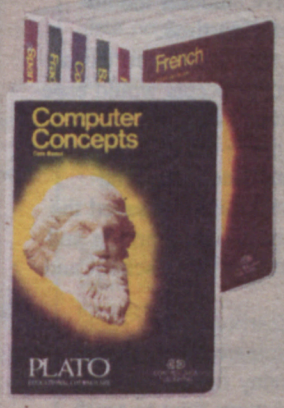

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